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SNAKE GOLD

A TALE OF INDIAN TREASURE; OF AN ANCIENT
EMBLEM AND ITS POWER OVER MEN TO-DAY;
AND OF THE HAZARD OF CASA BLANCA

BY
HERVEY WHITE



Decorations by
ELIZABETH MACKINSTRY

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1939

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. LAWSON	1
II. OLD MIGUEL	14
III. MR. DUNCAN	21
IV. THE START	27
V. THE MYSTERY	33
VI. THE SIGN	39
VII. CASA BLANCA	46
VIII. THE CHARM	52
IX. THE MINE	56
X. THE LABYRINTH	64
XI. THE TREASURE CHAMBER	70
XII. THE APACHES	77
XIII. FRENCH LOUIS	83
XIV. DEFIANCE	89
XV. THE CAMPAIGN	96
XVI. MANEUVER	101
XVII. SUSPENSE	107
XVIII. "THOU SHALT NOT KILL"	113
XIX. THE ARCHÆOLOGIST	119
XX. DON PABLO	125
XXI. A CAÑON	131
XXII. THE APACHE CAMP	138
XXIII. THE SIGNAL	144
XXIV. THE MOVING ROCK	151

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXV. A WHITE APACHE	157
XXVI. THE ANCIENT PRIESTHOOD	165
XXVII. CONSULTATION	170
XXVIII. A GROWING BROTHERHOOD	173
XXIX. THE SEARCH FOR DON PABLO	178
XXX. A LAST HAZARD	185
XXXI. IN MID-AIR	191
XXXII. LOVE THAT PASSETH UNDERSTANDING . .	197
XXXIII. NEW DANGERS	201
XXXIV. THE DUEL	205
XXXV. CONTENT	208
XXXVI. FRENCH LOUIS	213
XXXVII. WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT?	215
XXXVIII. TREASURE TROVE	218

SNAKE GOLD

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CHAPTER I

LAWSON

MY father was a sheep-herder in the San Antonio Mountains. It was in the days when there was war between the cow men and the sheep men, and my father was raided one night, the corrals burned with three thousand of sheep, the houses torn down and destroyed, and my father and the family killed. I was a baby then in the cradle. It was old Miguel who found me in the ruins and carried me in his arms to Don Pablo, who always hated Miguel afterwards for it. He said the child should have died with the rest. My mother and my brothers and sisters all were slain. At least Miguel thought I had brothers and sisters.

When they rode back in the dawn to San Bernardo, Miguel carried me wrapped up in his blanket. He said I didn't cry all the way, but laughed and tried to suck at his finger. They were glad to get away from that night's work; the smoke of the burning wool of the sheep had settled in the valley like a fog.

They hated the sheep for huddling up together, burning and smothering each other; cattle would have stampeded mad and free. Don Pablo said it was an

evil omen bringing me away. He said I would always be there to remind them of that business. But for all that, he kept me at the rancho; only he hated old Miguel, whereas before that time he had loved him like his dog.

They called me McClintock, which was my father's name. They said he was a big sandy man and died fighting like a trapped mountain lion. I am not a big man at all nor am I brave like my father. Perhaps I take after my mother. No one knew what she was like, or if they did know they would not ever tell me. Don Pablo said they should not tell me anything, but Miguel did tell a little later on, perhaps because he felt Don Pablo hated him and in a gentle way he wanted his revenge. But I was warned never to give a hint to Don Pablo and I never did. I was too much afraid. Do not think that he was ever unkind to me. He used often to call me to him and give me play-things. He shortened my name down to Clint.

It was a pretty place, the rancho at San Bernardo, a wide valley with the river running through. The name of the river is Piedras Verdes which means in English, "green stones." I used to wonder where the green stones might be, for the pebbles and the boulders were gray or pink. I played in the river all day with Mexican children while the women did their washing on the bank. It was curious we never learned to swim. I suppose no one took the trouble to try to teach us. Later on I learned all by myself. I saw Lawson do it once when in bathing. He said it was called swimming, and laughed at me to think I had never heard



the word. I used to go down and try every day. I tried for weeks before I seemed to get the stroke and then all at once I had everything at my command, back swimming and diving especially. But the Mexican boys never learned; they would not try, though I used to argue with them often on the matter. Every spring-time the river would be a flood; yellow water would come pouring down the valley and spread out over the flat lands of the bottom. Trees and driftwood would come down, and white foam on the sucking whirls and eddies. Then I liked to jump in and swim with the current, watching the cliffs and willows gliding backwards. I used to ride down for miles on the foam crests till I had to walk back hours to the rancho. Lawson said it was dangerous to go in then, one might get dragged down by the snags or the trees; but it was easy to keep out of their way, we all went down the current's stream together.

Lawson was a prospector from the States, but for some years he had lived at San Bernardo. Some of the Mexicans said he was a fugitive from justice and there were all sorts of stories in the beginning about the crimes that he might have committed. I don't know; he was friendly to me. I was five years old when he came and he used to look at me curiously but kindly. Sometimes he would put his hand on my hair, but I never quite felt comfortable when he did that. He never pressed down on my head but just stroked my hair lightly and softly. Perhaps he knew that his hand was disagreeable and cold; there was always a dry harshness about it. Anyway he did not often touch

my hair. He just gazed at me with his expressionless blue eyes. His hair was white, but not so white as his eyelashes and eyebrows, which at a distance looked like scars on his freckled face, they had such a death-like pallor to them.

He used to like to take me out with him on the long prospecting tours that he made from the rancho, often staying for weeks in the wilds of the mountains. He was very gentle always with me then. He would cook for me and make my bed in the cosiest places, and he always insisted on saddling my horse, taking the greatest care in arranging the blanket. But it was old Miguel who would saddle my horse the day we set out from the rancho. He would not go to work till he had seen to it, though Don Pablo might curse and laugh at him bitterly. Lawson didn't like to have Miguel do it either, and tried to put off the start till Miguel might be gone, but I always flared up when it came to that, and said petulantly enough that I wanted Miguel to do it. Was it not he who had taught me to ride? I wanted to say, who had brought me home a baby, but I did not dare, for fear it would get to Don Pablo's hearing. We were all of us afraid of Don Pablo. Even Lawson kept quiet before him.

I liked the long trips into the mountains though I never, I think, liked Lawson, much as I realized that I was ungrateful for not doing so. But the adventure and the constant change pleased me, the long trips across the cactus deserts and the high camps among the rivulets of the foothills. Lawson had a mortar and pestle to grind his ore and a blowpipe and acids

to test it. I used to watch him sometimes but without interest. I liked the rocks better where I found them. It seemed so useless to grind their pieces up to powder. I liked the flowers, too, and I played with them often. And I always had a book along for reading. Lawson didn't care to read, himself. But he liked nothing better than to know that I was doing so; and he never interrupted me, nor spoke to me, if I had a book. I sometimes used to hold one before me for hours and pretend reading, just to have the pleasure of the silence; meanwhile I could dream of anything I chose, or just sit ~~and~~ enjoy the solitude and loneliness, without even so much as thinking or dreaming.

I think Lawson's talk was often meant to instruct me, but oftener it was merely from a habit of talking. He told me stories from his life as a miner and prospector, stories of camp life and adventure. He rarely spoke of his own childhood, of his parents or his home life or companions. Things that would more naturally have interested me. Always the names of ores and minerals and formations that never seemed to have the slightest significance. Once he told me a story of the lost mines of Winopa or Guaynopa as the Spanish would spell it. That really interested me but Lawson said it shouldn't because it was all fiction.

It seems there is a tradition throughout Mexico that the wealth of the Montezumas was from one mine, and that it is known as Winopa. When the Spaniards came in and robbed the cities of their treasures, the knowledge of this mine was kept from them, although

they asked plenty of questions and made various explorations to find it. Lawson said the old church records were full of accounts of such expeditions and searches, and there were supposed to be Indians a-plenty who knew where the mines were. But they would never tell, not even to the priests in confession, and if there was any suspicion that some Indian might tell because he became friendly with the Spaniards, he was secretly put out of the way, though a father had to kill his own son, or a brother his brother, for the silence. As for the women, they never knew of the whereabouts of the mine, not even in the days of Montezuma. So strict had been the secrecy of the tribes. Now the knowledge had descended to but few of the old men, possibly only one or two knew it. But one or two were still supposed to know, and on their deathbeds they would give it to one worthy to preserve it. Probably to the oldest son.

When Lawson saw how interested I was he spent much time to show me that this was purely a fiction of tradition. He said the gold that adorned the Aztec temples and houses undoubtedly came from many mines, not from one. That much of it probably came even from as far as California and was the result of the accumulation of years. I think he felt disappointed that I should take so much interest in the story. He felt it to be a weakness in his method of my education which he had flattered himself was modern and scientific. He got so that he would only laugh uneasily when I questioned him about it and say, "What, are you thinking of that story yet? That is nothing but

a pack of lies, a pack of lies." One day he said abruptly out of silence, "I would advise you, Clint, not to make free with the Mexicans about that story of Winopa. They get suspicious, and they don't like to talk about it."

"Do they know about it?" I asked eagerly. Lawson considered for a time. "They only know that it is something not to be talked about to a Gringo," he responded. "You must never forget, Clint, that you are a Gringo to a Mexican. No matter how much they may like you, and do for you. Now don't think any more about old superstitions," he added. "I think we may find something this trip, and if we do, boy, remember we are partners and you go halves with me and don't need to stay here either. You can go East and go into some big college. I will make you a great scholar, Clint." I knew that he meant this, and I humored him, but all the same I kept thinking of that story. I dreamed about it often at night and through the day I thought of it silently.

One day a curious thing happened to me; at least, it made on me a curious impression. We had been in one camp for a week, our pack mule had been lamed in some fashion and we were waiting for him to get well again. It was a pretty camp in a high narrow valley with green grass and a stream running through, and sandstone cliffs rising from the meadows. Lawson had been all day busy with his tests, pulverizing and blowing with his blowpipe till his brains were all blown out of his eyes. I had withdrawn to the shadow of the cliff; I had found one overhanging a little, and

with my book—it was the poems of Lord Byron—I had gone quite asleep with the monotony of the print. I was not old enough to appreciate the poetry. Well, as usual, I had been dreaming of Winopa, though I couldn't recall on awakening what I had been dreaming. But the dream had left me susceptible, I suppose, to an impression, and as I lay open-eyed, staring at the overhanging cliff, a curious character seemed to burn itself into my brain, it was like the fiery vision of a serpent. Gradually I came to realize that there was something actually scratched on the sandstone, cut in by human means and with intention, cut in roughly as with a piece of flint or with a pick. Here is a drawing of the character as I saw it:—



That there might be some drawing on the cliff did not surprise me, especially one of so primitive a nature. I knew that in comparatively recent times the country had been the retreat of the Apaches and in the ancient days the entire region had been cultivated. The mountain valleys were full of old terraced walls and the plains showed the traces of old villages.

But this emblem, growing out of my dreams as it did, had come to move me strangely, very strangely. I looked cautiously down toward the camp. Yes, there was Lawson as busy as ever with his blowpipe. I stared again at the curious tracing on the rock. It

seemed to coil almost toward the center as I looked at it, only the little mark in the middle kept straight and still. It was as if it were pointing somewhere. I stared at it till Lawson called me to ask if I wanted to go with him to take our animals to water. Then I realized the most curious thing about the inscription and the impression it had made on my mind. I realized that I was not going to tell Lawson about it. I would keep him away from the cliff for the rest of the day, and I would persuade him to move on the next morning. I was going to do all in my power to keep him from discovering it.



CHAPTER II

OLD MIGUEL

It was not long after we had returned to the rancho that we were told that old Miguel's father was dying. This was not a strange piece of news when we reflected that the old man was over ninety, and yet it impressed us as strange for we had begun to think of him as one who would never die. He had lived on much the same since I could remember, sitting trembling and palsied in the sunshine. The night we heard he was breathing his last, Don Pablo sent me down with some blackberry cordial. He said the old man had given him sons and grandsons, and he should not be neglected at his death-bed. I went down to the Mexican village, it was near midnight and everybody was sleeping. We had been sitting up late at the hacienda as we had guests, three officers from the army.

As I traversed the little street of the village I did not experience any fear at the darkness. The stars are always bright on the desert, and all the dogs knew me to be friendly. In fact, I had often been called out in the night, for, as the nearest physician lived twelve miles away, I was often employed on such service. I had charge of the medicine chest and prescribed all the simple remedies for the Mexicans' ailments. It

was only when I was opposite Miguel's house, when I saw the lighted candle through the window, that I first felt a little uneasy. Perhaps because of the voice I heard within. For it seemed that the old man was speaking. I had never remembered hearing him speak; I had never even thought that he could. He could only sit and tremble in the sunshine. But to-night, on his deathbed, his voice had come back, and he was speaking quite distinctly, though huskily. Something like the rustling of dead cottonwood leaves when they crowd underfoot in the winter. Of course I did not hear what he said. I felt that the message might be sacred and there was only old Miguel bending over him, himself a man of seventy I should imagine. I only heard the one word, "swear," and I saw him put a cord over Miguel's head with something dangling from it like a scapular, a thing not unknown with the Mexicans. I could hear Miguel mumbling in response as I quickly turned away from the window. I waited in the distance till all was silent and then went up boldly to the door, making some noise of stumbling and coughing so that they would know I was coming. "Some blackberry cordial from Don Pablo, and he hopes that your father is comfortable," I said in Spanish.

"Did you come by the window?" asked Miguel.

Now I had done nothing to be ashamed of in coming past the window; it was the short path that anyone would take and I had not stopped to listen for a moment. So if I was guilty of telling a falsehood, it was not in any way to protect myself so much as him. "No, I came by the front street," I said. "How is it

that you keep the window open?" "It is for the old man's soul to fly out," replied Miguel, and he took the blackberry cordial and thanked me. I did not stay with him, there was not any need, but I was frightened on the way back. It was as if the old man's soul might come out the window and ride on my bristling long hair. I was a boy yet, and had sometimes foolish fancies, though not usually, I must say in fairness to myself. The next morning we learned that the aged man was really dead, in fact, that he died soon after midnight. Don Pablo shrugged his shoulders and said, "Miguel has had a good drink of my brandy," but he didn't seem to bear him any grudge, and he sent down the usual gift of liquor for the mourners.

That night made a change in Miguel, and I was not the only one who noticed it. Whereas he had been silent before, he was silent now to the point of moroseness. He had always been gentle with me and called me *hijo*, which is the Spanish word for son. Now he did not even name me at all and rarely addressed me unless in answer to my question. I sometimes felt that this harshness was deserved by me, that he knew I had told him a falsehood. I grieved over it more than I can tell, and often, when away from him, I resolved to go to him and put my arms around his neck and say, "Miguel, I did go by the window. I did, but I did not stop to hear a word that was spoken; only by chance I heard the one word, 'swear.'" This I firmly resolved I would tell him when away, but when I came to him and tried to say it, his manner, his reserve, seemed to say to me, "I know that you lied to me about coming

by the window and it is what I should have wanted you to do. Henceforth you must lie to me always, and you must never again put your arms around my neck or I shall think you feel the cord that my father hung there, and I will shake you off in a passion like a madman." So I kept still and took comfort that he liked me the better for it, though in my heart I did not cease to grieve.

The winter came on raw and windy, there were heavy snows, they said, up in the mountains. I did not go out again with Lawson. He himself was in El Paso for a few weeks and then came back to hang about the rancho, though he made himself useful to Don Pablo in tending store or in mending the saddles or braiding ropes from horsehair or from leather. In the spring the floods came down the river, and I went for my customary swim. They had been warning me so much about the danger that I almost felt a thrill of pleasure as I looked upon the tawny, rushing water, and the big trees riding downward in the current far out beyond the willows that marked the bank when the stream was in its usual channel. I was about to strip my clothes off on the hillside when I heard someone calling out behind the bushes. It seemed as if the voice was in distress and I ran out to see what could be the matter. It was old Miguel on a mule that was swimming in a swirling eddy of the water, and he was kicking and cursing and half crying, trying to keep it headed outward from the bank. Then I saw what was the reason for this venture. Miguel's cow had been tied by a rope and forgotten till the rising cur-

rent caught her. She had drifted down as far as the rope would let her go, and there stood in a little grove of mesquite bushes with barely her head above the water. Miguel was going to the rescue, and the mule, which was not used to being ridden, but was kept only to drive before the wagon, was offering all the resistance that he could, though he was gradually being forced into the current amid the tangle and the thorns of the mesquite. Thinking that there might be need of me to help him, I hastily threw off my clothes to make ready, and it turned out to be well that I did so, for while Miguel succeeded in reaching the helpless cow, the mule struggled around so in the bushes that Miguel's knife was wrenched out of his hand and fell into the water. This left him quite helpless to manage the rope, as he could not possibly untie it in that rush of water, and there was danger of their all being dragged down together.

"Bring me a knife, boy, a knife," he shouted.

I took my dirk knife securely in my teeth and swam to him as quickly as I was able. He seized it and severed the cow's rope so that she quickly drifted out in the shallows. But Miguel himself was in danger for a moment, for the mule, becoming entangled in the bushes, was being dragged down on his knees, and though I tried to hold the beast by hanging on to one of the trees, he swung down with a lurch and went under, floundering and kicking in the water. It was then that something terrible happened, something that I could not understand. It seemed that one of the tree snags caught in old Miguel's shirt and the cloth

being rotten it yielded and left his breast bare and quite exposed. I was staring at him wildly. I could not help it, for he was not four feet in front of my eyes. I saw the cord around his neck, a thong of buckskin, and suspended from it was a small plate of green stone, something like the beautiful malachite sometimes found in the mountains, and engraved on this charm and shining as if inlaid with gold was the curious symbol I had seen on the cliff, the coiling of a serpent with a straight bar at the center. Of course but a miniature of the other, but so like it I could only gaze and gaze. As the mule rose again to his feet, old Miguel felt the water splash on his bare breast and looking down at the charm first, and seeing it thus exposed, he quickly looked at me to see if I had seen it. And when he saw my attention was riveted upon it, with a wild curse and an expression on his face I shall never forget, he reached forward and seized me with both hands by the head, and with a strength that seemed superhumanly terrific he lifted me bodily out of the water and flung me back over his head. Then he rode out to the shore without turning, without caring to see whether I was killed or not, without stopping even to complete the rescue of his cow that was pitifully mooing in the shallows. At least she was there when I recovered and dragged myself out of the water, reckless of the fact that I was living, wishing almost that I was not, stunned and bruised and beaten by the passion of the man who had affectionately saved my life so long ago.

I think it must have been the water that beat the

breath out of me when I struck it, for I lay on the bank a long time stunned and dizzy and found at length I was shivering with cold. I had sense enough to lead the cow out, however, and finally to get my clothes on. I led the cow up to old Miguel's door and there he was sitting on the sill with a new shirt on, quite proper in every way, and smoking his little black pipe.

"Here is your cow, Miguel."

"All right, son (hijo)," he said gruffly.

That was all, but I was so thankful for the term of endearment that I went crying all the way to the hacienda.

Don Pablo met me at the gateway. "I guess a snag struck you in the river," he remarked. "It has pretty well winded you, my hearty. You had better let the river alone in time of flood," and I promised him that I would not try it again. It seems I had a fever after this. They said I was half crazy for a week. They sent for old Miguel to come and care for me, for I was always much quieter when he was about me. He was not sullen with me ever after that, though taciturn and reserved he was always. But I did not mind that in old Miguel, and soon life went on much as it had before.

CHAPTER III

MR. DUNCAN

I LEARNED to read Byron, as well as many other of the poets, from Mr. Duncan. He read poetry in five different languages: German, French, Italian, Latin and Greek, besides his English and Spanish. He said after all he thought Byron was the best, though for my part I could never get much out of it. He never taught me any of the languages, but he helped me sometimes in my English and my Spanish. He said he wasn't anything of a teacher and it was a shame that Father Ignacio didn't know more Latin. Father Ignacio was much of the time away. He had to do duty for three different villages. He said he had ridden his jennet so much over the stones of the desert that it had jolted all the Latin quite out of him. Still he managed to teach me a little when he saw I was eager to learn.

Mr. Duncan was always working with the ancients: drawing maps and plans of their villages and digging in the prehistoric graves. He used to tell me if I had only had the good luck to have lived and died in prehistoric times he would have taken no end of trouble about me. As it was I was allowed to listen to him sometimes, especially if I had mixed his drink to suit

him. He liked Scotch best with a faint dash of bitters, hot water and a thin slice of lemon. I never put the sugar in the bowl but left seven lumps on a saucer on the table. He said seven was a mystic number and he liked it. He nibbled at the sugar from time to time as he sipped from the bowl and said, "Ah." Meanwhile I was filling his pipe, he had taught me precisely how to do it. I asked him once if he would have liked me to be prehistoric in that, but he said, "No, boy, you do very well as you are." He always called me "boy" or else McClintock, never Clint or Clinto as the Mexicans say it. He said it was a good Scotch name, McClintock, and I should be proud of it, and being proud, he accepted me as his friend.

He liked to have pretty things about him, though his clothes were the commonest garments of a miner. Lawson could not have dressed plainer, yet Mr. Duncan had a refinement about his person that Lawson or even Don Pablo could never have. His underlinen was always pure and spotless. He had the garments made of the finest fabric and washed by a Mexican woman, but not with other clothes. Preferably he had old Miguel's daughter, Maria, to do it. Then he carried some little furnishings in his pockets, all of them exquisite in selection; a little comb of tortoise shell and a mirror with a pale enameled cover that fitted over, ornamented with fluttering ribbons and a lute. But what I liked best was his notebook. The cover was of dark blue morocco and the paper was held in with a silk thread. When all was written up, it could be removed and a block of new paper tied in. It was

beautiful paper of ivory-white, firm and smooth as if coated with enamel. He did not write on this with an ordinary pencil of black lead sheathed in wood, but with a smaller pencil of solid silver; it was not large, about the size of a slate pencil and tapering perfectly at the point. He said it never needed sharpening, it wore off evenly. It had a ring set in silver at the upper end and could be fastened to the notebook when he traveled, tied into its little sheath. Once he let me write my name on a page just to try the smoothness of the pencil and it really seemed to glide over satin; it was a pleasure to write, it went so easily.

It was in the sacristy of the old mission at San Bernardo that the strangeness came over Mr. Duncan. With him it did not come all at once. I could see it growing gradually on him. At first he was only musing within himself and then suddenly he would break out whistling or singing. "What do you want, McClintock, you beggar?" he would say. "You had better be out in the sunshine." Then he began to get irritable and restless, and I seldom went to the church any more, though I missed the quiet darkness of the place; there was something so peaceful about it. San Bernardo had been a well-established mission in the days of the Jesuits before the Revolution. The old adobe ruins of the convent and cloisters remain standing, but the village at that time spread over considerable territory. The ground was cultivated for miles around, where now all has gone back again to desert. The old irrigating ditches are all dry. The Indians are scat-

tered or dead, the monks have been disbanded and forgotten.

It was the sacristy that held the old church records, and that was where Mr. Duncan spent so much of his time. There were other books from the old monastery library and formerly he had liked to have me with him, even picking out some things for me to read, such as lives of the church saints, and the Jesuit fathers' adventures and sufferings as missionaries in heathen lands. He himself was only interested in the manuscript volumes, old records of the monks, stained and yellow; some of them in coarse parchment-covered volumes, and many of them lying loose, some stuck together with the damp, and most of them blotched and faded with the mildew.

Father Ignacio had given them little attention. In fact, when Mr. Duncan first came, the books were half buried under a tumbled-in ruin. It was he who got me to move them for him into the sacristy and hard enough I worked to get them all. He wouldn't let the Mexican boys touch them. He said they had no regard for the perishableness of paper. It was his whim only, for in reality the Mexicans are very careful, and one would carry a butterfly in his hat for miles if he thought Mr. Duncan would like it, without so much as hurting a little feather of the fluttering silken down they shed so easily. But I was willing enough to dig out the old books and carry them to the shelter of the sacristy. Father Ignacio gave Mr. Duncan the key when he was away, though Miguel was very jealous of that privilege, he being the only one

entrusted with the church keys since it was his duty to open the big door every morning. But Mr. Duncan got quite savage when I mentioned it, and said those watch dogs of Indians were getting too querulous with long starving over the old bone that was left them now to guard. But why should he get suspicious of me too? Had I not moved all the library for him carefully?

One day there was great commotion in the village caused by the roof of the church caving in. A full third of the east end of the nave came crashing down in dust and confusion, even the altar was buried in broken timbers and plaster and huge broken tiles. My first thought when I heard of the catastrophe was that Mr. Duncan might be in the wreck, and I ran to the sacristy to see if he was there. I thought the roof of that, too, might have yielded. He was not there then, but he had been, it was evident, as his papers were spread out on the table and his little notebook lay open beside them. Was it possible that he had been in the nave of the church at the time of the falling of the roof? No, that could hardly be, either. He rarely went in the nave, if ever. It was the noise that had called him away. I would find him with the crowd that was assembled. I don't know how it was I looked at his little notebook, it was out of affection, I am sure, instead of curiosity, and I had no intention of really looking at his notes. But it was the little drawing that perhaps caught my eye; it was the last thing he had traced upon the paper. The little whirl that I had seen on the cliff, that had hung, too, on old Miguel's breast. Mr. Duncan had traced it very carefully, had

copied it from a faded piece of parchment. I knew, now, why the change had come over him, why he had kept aloof from me or driven me away. I was not surprised to see the little drawing. It was as if I had expected to see it. I stole away from the sacristy as if it had contained a corpse and felt a great relief when the yellow sunshine flashed upon me. I was glad to join the crowd that stood staring at the ruins and among them I saw Mr. Duncan, but I did not go near him to speak to him. I felt the little inscription would seem to be written in his features and I was not sure but he would see it, too, in mine.

CHAPTER IV

THE START

A BOARD screen was built across the nave of the church and a new altar constructed lower down. Father Ignacio said it would serve quite as well, the old space was too big anyway for his voice to carry, and there were never many worshippers for the mass. Mr. Duncan soon ceased his studies in the sacristy, and in a measure regained his old affability. I knew of long conferences with Don Pablo but, as they were more or less private in their appointments, I seemed to take no notice of the matter, as indeed it was not in any way my affair. There soon came to be talk of a general prospecting expedition into the mountains. At first it was advanced as a joke by Don Pablo but gradually we could feel it becoming more and more substantial. It was very much out of the ordinary for Don Pablo to go on a prospecting expedition as it had always been his previous custom to make light of gold mines and miners. He had, as a matter of fact, a gold mine of his own in his cattle. His property was increasing rapidly in value and he had already a much greater income than he could consume. So it was that at first no one of the Mexicans or myself took seriously this talk of a new project. But Lawson very soon grew

excited about it, and went about all day with feverishly bright eyes. Mr. Duncan seemed to be included in the enterprise as well, but none of us were surprised at his making an expedition into the mountains, as he often went alone and stayed for weeks, searching out the ruins of the ancients and braving all the dangers of the desert without a fear; the death of thirst, or the torture of lurking savages, for there were still many Apaches in the mountains.

By degrees the outfit was collected: shovels, picks, giant powder and provisions, tents, bedding and instruments for explorers' observations. It was not decided yet what men were to be chosen, and the Mexicans were all eager about it. I myself did not know whether I was to be taken or left and I was timidly concerned about the matter. Ordinarily I would have asked either Mr. Duncan or Lawson, but in this case I did not like to do so.

"Do you want to go, Clint?" said Don Pablo to me one day abruptly when I was gazing somewhat longingly on the preparations.

"If you would like it, Don Pablo," I stammered.

He did not make any reply but turned and walked away to the stables. I could see that he would have preferred I had answered him, "no," but how could I and still remain truthful? I gave up the idea of going, however, and began laying out plans for my studies. I consulted Mr. Duncan about books and he ordered a few texts from the city. Then an incident came along in my favor.

They were drilling a well for the stables. The well

in the courtyard would fail in dry seasons and Don Pablo had an idea for an artesian drilled well or, if it proved that the water would not rise in it, to put in a windmill to pump it. Accordingly they had set up a derrick and were sinking a twelve-inch shaft. They had got down some sixty feet when through the carelessness of one of the Mexicans they dropped a cold chisel, and there it lay in the bottom preventing their drills from working and proving a very difficult thing to get out. They tried grab hooks and slip nooses and everything, but a bar of steel lying at the bottom of a sixty-foot shaft is a very difficult kind of fish to catch, and they were about giving it up in despair. If it were a bigger shaft a man might go down; but a twelve-inch hole will hardly admit a boy even, and once a boy is let down to the bottom he cannot stoop or bend to pick up anything, nor can he grasp so heavy a thing with his feet and hope to hold it until they draw him up. There is one way that the question can be solved, but there are few men who are willing to permit it. That is to let a boy down headfirst into the hole and let him pick the drill up with his hands. This method was considered in the beginning but there was not a father among all of the Mexicans who would hazard his boy in such a venture, and neither would money tempt them to do it, though Don Pablo offered twenty-five dollars for a trial, and intimated he would pay double for a successful result.

From the first I felt that I was the one to go down that hole and the fear of it made my blood freeze at noonday. I knew that I was small enough to go down,

at least I was pretty certain I could do it for I was not a large boy for my years. Then, too, I had no father to prevent me. There was no one to save me from myself. But how I suffered from fear at the thought of it! It seemed that my hair would turn gray. In my imagination I went through all the horrors when I had gone to my bed at night, after I realized that I was going. I had made up my mind they would think of me, and I knew that I would not refuse, in fact I might even offer to do it. So all night the fear kept me chilled; at times even my heart stopped its beating. I saw myself tied by the feet and swung up from the ground beneath the derrick. Oh! the horror of that black hole in the ground! And to be let down, down, away from the light and headfirst, the long journey for the full sixty feet! Then to clasp the chisel, that would be happiness, but what if I stuck down there and they could not draw me out! The shaft might have some little turn in it that would wedge me up, with my hips or my shoulders; they would pull, then pull harder and harder, getting excited because my body did not yield, and they knew it would be fatal to leave me too long hanging head downwards and they must pull me out at any cost. I seemed to feel the strain and tearing of my loins, so vivid was my fancy in the darkness. I saw the men's horror as they drew out my mangled lifeless body. I shed tears as I thought of them putting me in the grave. It was a night of horrors such as I have never experienced and the dawn did not bring me any respite. I got up and went to Don Pablo; he was ordering his

horse to be saddled and he seemed in no very good humor.

"You can put me down that shaft, Don Pablo," I said, and I was frightened at the sound of my voice, it came out so husky and gasping. He turned on me more kindly than was his wont. I could see that he, too, had thought of it.

"I think you are too big, Clint," he said, "and we don't want to get you stuck down that hole."

"I think I could go by taking off my clothes," I replied. "I could shrug my shoulders together." It took him but a moment to decide.

"All right, we will try after breakfast, and since you seem to take so easy to underground, it may make you into a miner, and I will let you go on our expedition. I will give you Black Robin to ride."

That morning I could not eat any breakfast but they made me drink a cup of strong coffee. I went out to find old Miguel, it was as if I was going to get the sexton to give him an order for my grave.

"I want you to stand by the shaft, to put me down, and to stand by the rope," I asked pleadingly.

"Very well, son," he said calmly.

The men were all gathered around gloomy enough, when I stripped off my clothes and stood ready. They bandaged my eyes to keep out the dirt, but I was glad of it for it made the start easier. Then they fastened the rope around my ankles with a broad leather noose that would not cut; then I felt Miguel take me in his arms head downwards, my feet lay against his cheek. Oh, how my convulsive arms clasped his knees; I

think it was Mr. Duncan who unclasped my hands from Miguel's legs and who held them downward till I was started in the hole.

"Now show your Scotch courage, McClintock," he said with a low nervous laugh, and then I felt myself slipping down and down, the rough sides of the shaft rubbing on my hips and shoulders and the pain flowing over me like a steady stream of fire, my arms stretched ahead into vacancy. It was but a moment till I felt a check in the speed. Could it be possible that anything had failed them? Then I felt the soil strike my hands. It was the bottom and, yes, the cold bar of the chisel! What a sense of great happiness that gave me! Eagerly I grasped it by the butt as they had bid me, to let it hang down in the shaft as I rose, and then I gave two faint kicks as a signal, getting slack by standing on my hands. Slowly I felt myself lifted and the current of pain flowing the other way. But I held on to that chisel as to life, and soon Miguel's naked arms were clasped about me.

They said I fainted after the bandage was taken from my eyes and I had told them I was all right, but I don't remember. Neither do I remember what they afterwards told me, that Mr. Duncan caught me up in his arms as I lay clay-besmirched and bloody, and kissed me all over my body as a mother might do her baby that is rescued, with the mother's tears raining from his eyes.

CHAPTER V

THE MYSTERY

OUR expedition set off in fine feather followed by many good wishes and wistful glances. We numbered seven souls in all, five men and two boys, for Don Pablo never traveled without a cook; this time it was French Louis who was chosen. The other boy besides myself was Carlos, a grandson of old Miguel who was also taken. That was because he was such a good guide, for no one knew the mountains so well as he did. We had five pack mules besides the bell mare and each of us was very well mounted. Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan rode mules as they are much surer-footed in the mountains, but the rest of us had horses because we liked them better, and I felt very brave on Black Robin with a handsome new bridle Don Pablo had given me, for now I seemed more in his favor. He was even affable and kindly toward Miguel, and we all reflected the sunshine of his temper. Carlos rode mostly by my side and I was at that time growing very fond of him. He was a handsome youth about my age perhaps, but larger and more advanced into manhood. Sometimes he would reach out and touch my hand as he rode, as is the custom with those affectionate Mexicans. But oftener he was shouting to the pack mules as they filed

along the trail behind the bell mare. The order of our cavalcade was as follows: Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan at the head with Lawson and Louis coming after, then old Miguel leading the bell mare, then the pack train and last, I and Carlos. So it was he could touch my hand lightly and no one could reproach me about it; for on the rancho we were not considered as equals, an American or "white man," and an Indian.

What gayety we had at our first encampment when Lawson and Louis had a bright fire burning and the Mexicans were busy with the pack mules! I carried water and helped with the tent, which already had been pitched for Don Pablo. Mr. Duncan was to have a bed in one corner and I busied myself unrolling their blankets and making everything homelike and comfortable. We had two more tents, if we cared to sleep under cover, but the weather was so beautiful at that season we preferred our beds under the stars. The stew, or ragout, as Louis insisted on calling it, was simmering and steaming in the saucepan and we spread out an oilcloth for the table and arranged the tin plates and the dishes. How gay was Don Pablo that evening as he called for the wine to go round. Even the Mexicans had their portion by the fire and were hospitably taken into the conversation. Louis waited on the table at the beginning, but, being urged to eat by Don Pablo, he sat down in his kitchen by the fire on the opposite side from the Mexicans. I had always been admitted to the table of Don Pablo, though at times I would gladly have relinquished that honor. To-night I sat opposite to him, and his eyes often

rested on me kindly. I have not said that I believe Don Pablo's American name was Paul Galloway, though we seldom if ever heard it at the hacienda. He had been in Mexico for twenty years and his Spanish was quite as fluent as his English. He was a big man and dark; I thought him handsome, certainly he was striking in appearance. He was stern often. He never had been married nor did ladies ever come up to the rancho. He had given himself up to amassing a fortune, and now he had it, but he used to say it was useless as he had no one to help with it or to spend it for and he himself was best off in the desert. It seemed inconsistent with his character that he should be off on this prospecting expedition but we thought little of it among us, we were glad to see our patron in good humor.

At the end of the fourth day's march there seemed to be some doubt as to our route, and as we were in the region in which Lawson and I had made our last expedition, that prospector took upon himself much superiority of knowledge of the country and proposed that we make for our old camp by the sandstone cliffs where the water and pasture were excellent. At the mention of the sandstone cliffs Mr. Duncan enlivened his interest and I myself felt a thrill of excitement as I realized the three symbols were approaching each other. The one scratched on the overhanging cliff, the second on the charm on Miguel's breast, and the third, in Mr. Duncan's little notebook, being copied from musty old church records. That Don Pablo knew also of the symbol I did not doubt, though his

face never betrayed his emotions. That he knew of the inscription in the church records, Mr. Duncan having told him, was evident; and they were expecting to find its duplicate on the sandstone cliff. But neither of them knew of old Miguel's possession of the symbol, and so it was I found myself between the two great forces, the aggressive acquisitive energy of the European Americans, and the mystic faithful secrecy of the aborigine who was guarding the tradition of his father. It was dawning on me gradually as well, that this symbol had to do with the lost mines of Winopa. I can't explain how the conclusion settled on me, but I was confident now of the real purport of our search and I suspected that Miguel also knew it. That Lawson was in ignorance I could easily see as he was babbling still of assays and formations, of specimens he had picked up and tested.

All these points cleared up to me as I lay that night under the stars, while the French cook slept soundly on one side of me, and Lawson quite as deeply on the other. I wondered about the stars, as we all do, and whether they determined the destiny of men. It was at the point of my going to sleep, probably as I was blinking, that they seemed to trace that symbol in the heavens, that coiled serpent with the pointer in the middle; but my sleep when it did come was dreamless and I awoke to find the sun above the mountains and Don Pablo inquiring of Carlos why the pack mules were not being saddled for the journey and whether old Miguel was still asleep.

Carlos was very humble and apologetic. He was

acting under his grandfather's orders. A mule had strayed off from the others before dawn and old Miguel had set off to find it, bidding him merely guard the others; and for two hours he had waited his return.

"Did he ride?" asked Don Pablo curtly.

"No, sir, he went on foot."

"A curious way for a Mexican to travel."

Carlos did not hazard a remark.

"You may go," said Don Pablo as briefly. "We wait here in camp for his return."

That return did not take place until noon, and it found us impatient enough. Old Miguel looked weary with his searching but there was no pity or consideration shown him then. Was he hungry? He could wait till night to eat, all were sharp now for the march and the saddles, and in an hour's time we were off toward the mountains, Lawson riding ahead of the others quite triumphant, and the pack mules trailing slowly on behind.

I gave old Miguel my lunch which I had made ready when there was no one to see what I was doing. "Thank you, son," and he slipped it in his shirt-front, munching on a bit from time to time. I thought of the charm concealed by the underlinen and I did not feel that the wearer was uneasy that I should think of it. Neither was he uneasy that he was approaching its counterpart on the cliff, provided he knew of its existence. He was no more than a patient old Indian mule packer, in no great haste to reach the journey's end.

It was dark when Lawson brought us to the camp

ground, and we were all of us hungry, tired, and cross. The tent was not put up, it was so late, but French Louis insisted on giving us a good supper. We all slept well, the day had been a long one; and the gray dawn showed me the old familiar outlines with the sandstone cliffs beyond the brook, with one overhanging where the mystic sign was coiling even now. I looked about the camp where all were sleeping, and, slipping out of my blankets and drawing on my trousers, I ran up softly to the cliff. Imagine my amazement when I found the inscription was not there. I could not be mistaken, the spot was precisely the same as I had remembered it, the hollow of the ground beneath, where I used to lie, the sandy cliff overhanging just above, the angle with the rocks and with the mountains just the same. But the face of the pink sandstone was as innocent of mark of coiling serpent as the cheek of a girl when she meets you in the morning, though you know that spot was kissed the night before.

CHAPTER VI

THE SIGN

THERE seemed to be no hurry about leaving our camp by the cliffs. Don Pablo had the tents all put up and French Louis made a permanent kitchen. Miguel and Carlos kept the animals down the stream and everything was quiet as need be. It was Lawson alone who was dissatisfied. "What do they mean?" he complained to me when speaking of Mr. Duncan and Don Pablo. "Now I could show them some promising ledges, but instead they ride miles along that sandstone inspecting it as if they expected to find nuggets. Of course there is no mineral in that; why don't they take the advice of an expert?"

On the second day he could endure it no longer and as Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan were again to set out for a ride along the cliffs, but this time in a different direction, Lawson proposed to Don Pablo to take me and investigate a red mountain in the distance farther on from the direction we had come. Don Pablo willingly assented, and gave orders for our horses and provisions. I was putting on my leggings in my tent when Mr. Duncan entered somewhat cautiously. "McClintock," he said and then waited, I could see he had something to say to me. "Yes, sir." I gave

my attention. "You don't care much about prospecting, I imagine, but all the same you can keep your eyes open.

"Suppose you see anything like this sandstone outcrop we have here. It may show up again farther over in the foothills. Well, if it does, ride along it. Never mind Lawson, keep to yourself. Look out for an inscription on the rocks, it won't be very plain, you must search for it. It will be something like this," and he drew the fatal symbol on the corner of a newspaper. "Especially note the way the end of the straight line in the center points; better take a reading with your compass. Establish the exact direction and the distance from here. Come now, you are born for an ethnologist, only not a word to Lawson, he won't understand."

He tore up the drawing he had made and put the bits of paper in his mouth. Soon I had started on my journey.

Lawson and I had been riding some miles and had gained a ridge and were looking on westward when Lawson remarked with some sarcasm in his voice:

"There is that sandstone formation again. Our two great miners should come over here and examine that. They will be just as apt to find gold in it as they would in the adobe walls of the hacienda."

As it was in our course we continued to ride toward it and as we approached the pink wall of the outcrop I proposed that we ride some distance along it. When I saw some birds flying about it, I pretended a great interest in swallows and was for going up to take a

look for nests. It was Lawson's way always to humor me, and he obligingly led my horse as I scrambled along the ledge, oftentimes running so he would not get impatient with delay. All the time I kept my eyes open for the inscription, but not a scratch on the pink wall could I see.

"You take as much interest in sandstone as our two scientific prospectors," said Lawson as I joined him to stop an hour for lunch.

We were loosening the girths of our saddles and were about to lead our horses down to drink, as there was a stream bed at the foot of these cliffs with sometimes a deep and transparent pool of water, when Lawson stopped suddenly as if he had been shot, and I saw his face was white and fixed with terror. His big blue eyes seemed almost starting from his head. Had he, too, seen the fatal inscription? But, no, he was staring on the ground.

"Look at that!" he said, stretching out a finger which shook like his voice when he began speaking.

"What is it?" I asked eagerly, not yet frightened, for the noonday sun was yellow all around.

Lawson pointed to a little bunch of yucca leaves on the sand. They were the long spine-like leaves of the deer-tongued lily, or what are often known as Spanish bayonets at home. I saw nothing alarming about them. There was a neat little sheaf of them, that was all, cut and laid down as a child might have left them.

"Well?" I said, looking at him inquiringly.

"It is a sign," said Lawson after a little time.

He was evidently struggling now for self-control, for a horror as of death had been upon him.

"A sign?" I asked again.

"An Apache sign. The Apaches are on the trail. One has gone ahead, he is the spy to reconnoiter; he leaves these signs to the party that will follow; they know then whether the way is clear or not. We are between the two. There is no doubt they have seen us."

We silently took our rifles from their scabbards, and, taking our cartridge belts from the pommels of our saddles, we buckled them securely around us. Lawson had a revolver as well; I had only a bowie knife at my belt but I untied the string that held it in its sheath. By this time I was beginning to be frightened, for I knew what Apaches meant in the mountains. If there were a few of them, they would shoot us from their hiding places; they would want our cartridges and our horses. If there were many, they might try to take us alive for a torture dance. They mutilate the body of a victim, then hang him up by the feet from the limb of an oak tree and build a slow fire beneath his head, as they dance about and slash his naked body. Even Lawson could laugh at my terror as I glanced at every bush and boulder expecting to see one. I knew their ugly faces. I had seen them once; low foreheads, eagle eyes, and stooping shoulders. They were like animals, more like wolves than like men, and their greasy hair hung over their faces in dank locks from which they peered maliciously out.

"Oh, there are not a thousand," laughed Lawson. "There are probably not ten to say the most. Maybe only a family, a brave and squaws. Oh, if they shoot you, you will never know what hit you. Not that they are very good shots, but they never come out in the open. An Apache can hide himself behind a little sprig of sage brush, or bury his body and lie in the open sand. We may as well eat our lunch and go on, but in case they haven't seen us I will puzzle them with this sign."

He picked up the leaves to rearrange them.

"Fresh cut!" he said, looking at the stubs. "I should say not an hour ago, look how the sap is still running out."

I was trying to eat my lunch the same as he did, but the meat was so much sawdust in my mouth. As for the bread, it rolled up like dry cotton and I couldn't get saliva enough to moisten it. I tried taking a drink from the pool, but the swallows went down in hard lumps without so much as moistening my throat anywhere. Even Lawson didn't seem to find his lunch very tasty.

"I'll bet that fellow has gone down the draw," he said suddenly. "If he has, I can find his tracks in the damp sand."

I hated to call him back after he had laughed at me, but it seemed dreary to be shot down all alone. I got up close to Black Robin; at least he would protect me on one side from a bullet, but then I kept glancing across the saddle. What if an Apache should take advantage of my concealment and slip up and

stab me with a knife! I was relieved when Lawson called me to him; he pointed to a track in the wet sand.

"See," he said. "He has a hole in his moccasin. You can catch the print plainly of his toes. Oh, he has seen us and is making down the stream bed. He will turn off if he thinks we are following him."

"Perhaps we had better return to camp," I suggested, but Lawson had his courage back again.

"Oh, they would shoot us anyway if they were well armed enough to do it. I guess these are poor devils on the move with their squaws. You can see that the fellow has old moccasins."

We led our horses and continued to watch for tracks, but after a half mile we lost sight of them. In time the panic of fear had left me, and we were once more talking of our red mountain. About four o'clock we struck some very rough country, cut up with deep cañons and chasms, impossible for us to think of getting over.

"We'll go back and get a way out toward camp," said Lawson. "As it is now we won't get in till long after dark."

The thought of this seemed to worry me again, and we retraced our way for an hour without saying anything. It was near sunset when we turned down into a cañon that we thought would open up on the wider valley. There were great red boulders all about it, many of them big as city houses. The reddening sky lit up with lurid light. Lawson leaped off his horse,

the pass was so narrow and precipitous, and once we were passing a pool of water.

"There's that fellow again," he exclaimed, pointing to the sand, and, sure enough, there was the moccasin print of a left foot, and the two toes had left their impression in the sand. The cañon opened just then; we leaped on our horses again, and precisely as we set out on a gallop, I had a vision of the inscription up above me. It was scratched on the blackened boulder of the cañon, but the straight mark of the center pointed away from the direction we were going. Not backward, it was true, but to the south. I was glad that we were still free from its coilings.

CHAPTER VII

CASA BLANCA

MIGUEL came to help me with my saddle. He seemed almost affectionate as he met me; we had made the last two hours by moonlight and had some trouble getting into camp; still that was hardly enough to give anxiety, and I wondered that the stolid Indian should be softened. While he was undoing the girths I stepped around on the other side of the horse to untie my blanket from the saddle; it had some little specimens folded in it and I was solicitous that they should not get spilled. I was reaching over to untie the farthest string, the one near Miguel, and as the knot resisted slightly his hand naturally came up to aid me. I thought nothing of this; I was used to being waited on in such things, but I was suddenly surprised to find my hand clasped in his and I looked up to see what was the matter. His eyes were looking hauntingly at me, almost pleadingly. I could see them very plainly in the moonlight. It was as if they held a light all their own, they gleamed so from the caverns of their sockets. Irresistibly I put up my other hand and without surprise I felt his free hand closing over. Then a strange thing happened with the horse standing patiently between us, for old Miguel drew my two hands to his breast; his shirt was open; I could feel

his heart beating and in some way I found the charm within my fingers, closing down against the firmness of my palms. His own long sinewy hands were clasped over mine as naturally as leaves of spring fold in a bud. Then they opened up and came and rested on my shoulders as his low voice muttered something in the Indian language.

"Come out to your supper, McClintock," called Mr. Duncan, who seemed unusually merry that evening, and I went toward him, but with a feeling that I had sworn that I would not now tell him of the inscription I had seen in the cañon. I would not lie, but in some way I would evade it. The affair was not difficult to maneuver, for the story of the Apache took every one's interest while Lawson and I were eating supper. French Louis was so frightened he could hardly serve us, and even Mr. Duncan looked grave.

"What, you?" said Don Pablo in mock raillery. "You who go alone and unarmed through the mountains?"

"That is different," said Mr. Duncan, "quite different. It is because I am unarmed and have only a burro instead of a mule that they do not take the trouble to molest me. What the Apaches want is guns, cartridges, and horses, and those things they will get if they can."

"Let them try," said Don Pablo contemptuously. "My gun and horse are always ready." But I could see that the worry was coming back to Lawson, though he harshly told French Louis to go back to the ranch by himself when he was talking of a general retreat.

"Well, McClintock, anything of the inscription on the sandstone?" cautiously inquired Mr. Duncan after I was established in the tent.

"I looked as carefully as I could along the cliffs, but found nothing there, and then we were forced to turn away."

"Of course, and you were excited by the Apache. And quite right, too; they are very ugly devils. But no matter, we will get on very well. And I say, McClintock, what a jolly old beggar that Miguel is. He has a flask of the most excellent brandy. Where do those fellows get such liquor? Oh, they know the good things of life as well as we do."

The next morning we were off to the southward, having made a right angle in our course. There was a curious feeling throughout our company, though no opinion was expressed on the subject, and different members were differently affected. I studied each one in his turn. Don Pablo was determined, even stern—a change from the holiday comradeship we had enjoyed the days before. He seemed now to have a light contempt for the garrulous laughter of Mr. Duncan, who must have had more than one nip of Miguel's brandy from the way that he told stories and sang. We all knew the weakness of Mr. Duncan, but we gave little heed to the matter as he never became brutishly drunk and his gay spirits but enlivened our monotony. Lawson was sullenly perplexed at the vagaries of this wild-goose expedition. He did not hesitate to make sarcastic remarks to me and Louis, but he still showed respect to Don Pablo.

Poor French Louis was so alarmed at the rumor of the Apaches that he insisted on riding between me and Lawson. His fears had made Carlos also anxious, but Miguel was under the strangest spell of all, for while patiently obeying the will of Don Pablo he seemed none the less to move as in a dream; he gave no recognition of his intimacy with me the previous evening, but went about his work as in a state of numbness. It was really almost pitiful to see him.

This march was kept up for four days; we were traveling parallel with the distant mountain ranges. One night we had no water, a dry camp, and the country was getting difficult and broken. The worst were the chasms or cañons around which we often had to skirt for miles. They would suddenly yawn in our path with a drop of from five hundred to a thousand feet, down, down, to the distant watercourse below. A red mountain in the distance to the west seemed to make Mr. Duncan particularly hilarious, though when he spoke of it once before Don Pablo he got little sympathy; not even, in fact, the easy silence of forbearance. The fourth day was spent chiefly in making circles. Often we were left to stay with the pack mules while Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan went ahead. We knew they were not looking for water, although all of us were parching with the thirst.

Lawson got disgusted at length and rode off to a higher mountain valley by himself. He said there was apt to be a rivulet on the uplands and he, for one, was going to have a drink, besides being human

and thinking of his horse. So it was when Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan came back they found but four of us desolately waiting. They, too, looked disheartened and puzzled and were in a rage when they learned Lawson had absconded. What could we do? We could hardly go and leave him. It seemed as if all of us hated each other as well as Lawson. I have never spent so disagreeable an hour, that I remember, not even in all the dangers that were to follow. In two hours' time Lawson came back with a canteen full of water and good news for us. There was pasture and a clear brook in the upland valley and a fine view of the country that lay around us. He was even interested in another red mountain that showed to southward and it was agreed we should make for permanent camp. Lawson took the lead, once more satisfied with himself. And as each one of us in turn had had a drink from his canteen and as the animals seemed also to scent the moisture, we felt something of cheer again among us.

How delightful was the little stream when we attained it. We threw ourselves gratefully down to drink and let the horses walk in and stand as they liked. Then we put our tents on the green grass and arranged our baggage to serve as fortification, "for the Apaches may look for us in this quarter," said Mr. Duncan with a gay wave of the hand.

Lawson was quite swelled up with importance. "Some one has made use of this place in times past, that is certain!" and then turning to Miguel, who was about to drive the mules up the slope, he said in

Spanish, "When you get upon the brow of the hill you can look around the point and see the ruins of a white house, 'Casa Blanca,' down below."

"Casa Blanca?" said Don Pablo, turning sharply.

"Casa Blanca?" and Mr. Duncan showed wide eyes.

But I was only interested in old Miguel, for at the words, "Casa Blanca," he seemed quite stricken. He did not say a word or give a sign, but the stony look of horror that came over him! It was as if he saw a spectre before him. I ran up, pretending I had forgotten to give him his knife, but it was really that I might stand by him, might touch him if need be, to prove to him my reality. I got him to turn and attend to the animals, though his hand as I took it to lead him was as stiff and cold as if it were made of stone.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHARM

THE fact that there should be a house in this wild region, even but the Indian ruin of a house, was enough to excite any one's attention, much more that of an antiquarian like Mr. Duncan or an intelligent keen observer like Don Pablo. Accordingly it was no surprise to any one that our two leaders should be interested in the matter and should be eager at once for the view. For myself, I stayed with Miguel out of pity, he seemed quite helpless as if overwhelmed with dread. I tried to talk with him about the animals, about anything, but I could see that my words made no impression on his intelligence; still, I felt that he was soothed by my presence and I would not leave him till Carlos came up.

"Your grandfather is overcome with the heat," I explained. "Have a care for him and call me if he needs anything." Then I went out on the ridge where Mr. Duncan and Don Pablo were standing, but before I reached them they had started back to camp. I could see they were conversing earnestly about something.

It was surely a most beautiful spectacle as I looked down from this shoulder among the mountains; close

below me lay the little lap that held our camp, on which the brook was thrown down like a ribbon, then beyond that was the precipice, the edge; and, across the chasm, the wildest, strangest country. It was as if some earthquake had rent the rock asunder and left all through it a thousand radiating crevices. The rock at the entrance of these cañons was weathered into great towers and obelisks of which the color was the pinkish blue of lilacs. Back in the depths it seemed to deepen into purple, but that was perhaps the shadows that lay there; to the left was a curious formation, a natural bridge flung square across a cañon. It seemed to connect this cracked and earth-rent district with the mainland that was free from such-like fracture.

This bridge gave out on a grassy, rounded knoll and, yes, yes, there was the Casa Blanca, a white house, gleaming in the sunset. No wonder Mr. Duncan was excited, for the heavy walls were well preserved and high. The roof had long fallen and disappeared, but the precision of the wall outline was still perfect. Like a temple it stood there, though it impressed me from the first as a treasure house; for a moment I felt the gold fever surge over me as I dreamed of royal wealth, of fame and power; but the distant prospect came quickly then to claim me, the purple of the wrinkling chains of mountains, that spoke of the early epochs of the world. Man seemed such a paltry thing to me, with his low ambitions, and I pitied old Miguel the most of all. For I knew now that I was looking on the lost Winopa. I knew that Mr.

Duncan had the plans of it, and I knew that Miguel was sworn to guard it, no matter if he should sacrifice everything he loved. I felt myself an atom between two forces, to be crushed or to be used by either, as should prove fitting; but to be looked upon ruthlessly, relentlessly as a worm that we may tread beneath our feet. How it was I knew all this I cannot tell, but it came over me like the great peace of a resolution, and I made a vow there in the glory of the sunset that I would give myself entire to save my friends, to save Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan from the craze of riches, or to save my foster father, old Miguel, who was no less a slave to his tradition, and who would give his best beloved as he had sworn.

The dizziness of my ecstasy having seized me, I looked down to regain my self-control, and there, at my feet, against the toe of my boot, turned up by it and glancing in the sunlight, I saw a plate of malachite made like a charm, the exact counterpart of the one worn by Miguel, that was now against the terror of his breast. Mechanically I picked it up and examined it, though I knew every particular already as if I had seen it in another life. It was a thin plate about an inch wide and two inches long and an eighth of an inch thick, with a perforation in one end through which to pass a cord. The edges were rounded and worn as with long use, so also were the corners, which were rounded. The whole surface was smooth and polished as if with long contact with human skin, which, you know, is softer than any silk or satin. The remarkable thing was the weather had not affected

this, the sun or rain checked it into roughness, though it was probable that it had lain here for centuries, that the watcher who had worn it on his breast had dried away and risen with the dust, for there was no mark of his bones upon the ground.

I examined the little serpentine inscription. It was incised first and then inlaid with gold; the back was plain and void of all device, only ornamented with the marbled colors of the malachite which went through all the beautiful shades of green. It was curious, but there was a sense of flesh about it. I was tempted to pass a cord through the perforation and hang it on my breast. I have wished ever since that I had yielded to the impulse, it might have saved me all the grief that followed. But it seemed then to me like pledging myself to the mine and to Miguel, whereas my vow had consecrated me to the cause of all my friends. I must serve as well Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan. So I slipped the little treasure into my pocket and leisurely descended to the camp.

CHAPTER IX

THE MINE

THE next morning Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan set out early to find a way down to Casa Blanca, for though within gunshot it was lower and very difficult of approach. Carlos came to saddle their mules. He said his grandfather had been ill all the night, but now, as he was sleeping quite peacefully, he begged that we would not disturb him. Lawson agreed to stay and guard the camp and we sat about stupidly enough till dinner time, then Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan came back; they had found a way down to the ruin and proposed moving the camp down immediately, but they said as there was no water there we would keep up this camp for the animals, returning to it for the night. About that time old Miguel put in an appearance and I was relieved to see him looking so much better. He was the same patient Indian guide now and said he would set about making things ready.

In two hours we were down at the ruin, which I will endeavor to describe a little better. As I have said, it was on a grassy knoll which was situated at the end of the great bridge. The road across led directly into a dark cavern, and here was everywhere the trace of the works of man. The house itself was

built of huge blocks of white marble, a stone quite foreign to that region, and on the corner stones was engraven the spiral symbol that was now so familiar to my eyes. It was a rectangular building without windows, thirty feet by fifty on the outside. Within were two rooms, the first a vestibule and the second an audience chamber, well proportioned and spacious. The entrance was from one end, the one facing the causeway. The floor was also of marble, but was now covered with the crumbling dust of the walls and possibly with slabs of marble from the roof. In the inner room was a stone table, but built solid like an altar or still more like a tomb it was so heavy. Mr. Duncan said probably some one was buried there; we would investigate that later on.

What interested us now was the mine. Even Lawson was eager for exploration. Don Pablo seemed to have his plans well matured, for he first carefully established the camp on the slope of the grassy knoll, and then sent back Miguel and Carlos with the animals to the upper camp, seeing them well on their way and cautioning them to look out for Apaches. He promised to send them a detachment in two hours, no doubt meaning Lawson and me, and not until they had rounded the first corner did he begin preparations for exploring the mine. He then got out a coil of rope which he asked French Louis to carry, gave Lawson a crowbar and pick and Mr. Duncan an ax and a hammer, while I was loaded down with small articles—a saw, some nails, some material for torches. Each one of us put candles in his pockets and supplied

himself plentifully with matches. Thus equipped, we proceeded over the causeway, Don Pablo going ahead with his rifle. He seemed to feel that some danger was imminent, for he rarely took his rifle from the scabbard. It was a sixteen-shooter, a beautiful weapon, and Don Pablo was considered a dead shot. We all of us had our rifles slung to our shoulders and were armed with revolvers as well, and bowie knives that all the cow men carry.

I shall never forget that dizzying march across the causeway, for the bridge was not more than eight feet wide, and spanning as it did a chasm some thirty feet across, one had the feeling of being suspended in the heavens, for down below was a sheer drop of two thousand feet. The little stream sparkled in the bottom of the cañon, threading in and out of the little clumps of trees, the sound of its waters never reaching us. Even the rivulet that leaped the precipice from our upper camp that lay above us was silent from the breathless depth it met with, and long before reaching the bottom it disappeared in a tiny cloud of spray. As I hurried across I remember my sickening sight caught a palm tree far down among the depths of the cañon; it seemed so peaceful and perfect as it stood there, but quite tiny from being so far away, no more than a toadstool as I remember. I don't know why I seemed so fond of it. It was as if it said good-by for all the sunlight, and I should never cross along that bridge again. In a moment we were in the gloomy cavern and Don Pablo was giving orders for the work.



It seemed there was a shaft in the cavern, a black hole yawning in the darkness, and I felt the fear of it already coming over me as I realized that I must be swung out over its awfulness and let down away from life and light. It was some comfort that this time I should not have to go headfirst, but then, neither would I have the protecting earth around me, but would be swinging, swinging down to the unknown. However, I had now learned that much the worst part of going down a hole is imagining the horrors of it beforehand, and I busied myself with preparing a torch, while Don Pablo sent Lawson and Louis back for the tent poles to rig a kind of scaffolding or derrick. I had time as well to glance about the cavern and make out in what sort of fairy place we were. It was not high, not more than twelve feet at the most to the ceiling, which was hood-shaped, arching over the dark shaft, and large enough to leave wide passage all around it. The highest scoop of the hood gave out to the light and the causeway, and Mr. Duncan pointed out to me carefully how this was not a cave formed by nature but was cut out by the patient hands of men. Nor was the causeway itself entirely natural, he showed me, though undoubtedly the Indians had nature to assist them. One of the towering obelisks had evidently been dislodged, perhaps by an earthquake, and rested at an incline across the chasm, our side being on the lower end. This had been built up to a level with masonry and rubbish and a roadway made across to the grassy knoll.

“What marvels of patience those ancients would

undergo," he mused, but just then Lawson and French Louis came with the tent poles and we were so much interested in the derrick that we forgot all other matters for the time. The shaft was about five feet across and not difficult to manage, as the sides were of the solid granite rock and the footing was consequently secure even to the last inch of the edge. First we let down a torch to test the air, though there was little danger of damp in that region. The torch was a ball of twine soaked in turpentine and suspended on a wire. I was gratified to see it lighted up the shaft, which was free and dry, some forty feet deep, and plainly with a comfortable dry bottom.

"Let down Clint first to give a partial test to the derrick, and I will follow after," said Mr. Duncan.

Accordingly I put my legs over the bar and they swung me out into the black vacancy. The worst part is making the start, is feeling the solid earth removed from under.

"Let me down slowly," I gasped to their faces as I watched the dear daylight rise and leave me. They laughed back reassuringly enough, and I could hear Don Pablo's voice give out the orders. I did not mind the swinging so much as I had imagined, and the air was very pleasant, warm and dry. They called down to me:

"Try to touch the bottom; we have got to the end of the rope."

"I swing my legs. No, I can't touch."

"Let down on your hands from the bar, then your feet will touch; let down! let down!"

Slowly I slipped my legs over. I was frightened; what if I could not draw up? But over me were the pitiless men, and I feared them timidly.

I let myself down. It was while I was swinging thus in the darkness that two long wet arms seized upon me. I gave one scream that set the shaft resounding, the scream of a wild animal entrapped. Then the calm of unconsciousness relieved my terror, and I do not remember anything that happened more.

CHAPTER X

THE LABYRINTH

MY fear had all left me on awakening, and only a dazed curiosity seemed to govern me. I was in the dark, lying on my back, and Mr. Duncan's voice was far away from me.

"McClintock, McClintock," it kept calling. "McClintock, boy, why don't you answer?"

It did not occur to me that I should reply to him; I suppose I was still dazed from the faint. Once I heard something heavy strike something soft, and then the sound as of a man's body falling, succeeded by steps, heavy breathing, and the dragging of a bulk across the floor; after that there was a long space of silence, and then Don Pablo's voice also in the distance.

"Hello! hello!" it called. "Mr. Duncan, hello! hello!"

I had a feeling that I was in my grave, that they had buried me, and now they were trying to dig me out. The curious part of it, I felt no terror, nor even anxiety about it. I said to myself, "Now they have gone off to dinner. They will wait a while. How strange it is that dead folk are not hungry." Then I heard Don Pablo begin swearing, calling all the fiends to his assistance, a regular outpour of Span-

ish and English mixture, an eloquence that I have rarely heard excelled. It seemed directed against two classes of people; first, and mildest, against men who did not answer; and second, and strongest, against cowards who hid themselves in the dark, who dared not come above ground like Christians; these he called all the vile names in both his vocabularies and then I heard him leap down on the ground. I knew him by the ring of his spurs. Then the sputter of a match, then another, all the time cursing going on. Once I saw the faint gleam of a light, but it was only a dim reflection and passed away. Then the sound of the tramping of Don Pablo's footsteps, and all the time the swearing going on. At length his footsteps got fainter and fainter; for a long time I could hear the tinkling of the spurs, also the striking on the ground of his boot heels, but that, too, died away in the distance.

I waited and began to wonder why I did not call or stir, when Lawson's voice began in the old quarter; I could tell from the tone it was very anxious. "Don Pablo," it called, "Don Pablo, Don Pablo." It was this time that it occurred to me to answer. I wanted to say Don Pablo had gone away. But to my surprise I found I could not move my tongue and my mouth seemed to be filled full of something. I thought it might be the earth in which I was buried, but how funny it did not keep me from breathing. I tried some deep breaths and they seemed satisfactory in every way. The next time Lawson's voice called out, "Don Pablo," a roar of most awful thunder followed.

BANG, it went as if all around me, and then a long reverberation of the clamor. At this time I was sure I saw a flash of reflected light overhead, but very faint; perhaps it was many miles away. Gradually the sound died out of hearing, grumbling and groaning through all the earth. No more of Lawson's voice then, nor of Don Pablo's footsteps. I waited, it seemed, listening, for hours. Once I thought I heard other footsteps near me, stealthily this time, and as if of some one barefooted. Also I imagined I heard breathing, but I was not in any way afraid. That ceased in time or I forgot about it, or perhaps I had dropped off to sleep.

When I awoke I realized my hands were under me and I was lying on them, and when I moved, my arms had a tingling sensation of being asleep. I tried to get up, but found I could not. I found also that I could not move my arms. But I succeeded in rolling over on one side and then it was for the first time I realized I was bound hand and foot, my hands behind me; and, yes, I was gagged as well, with a roll of cloth. That was what had kept my wide jaws aching. It seemed a curious thing, but not anything to be especially worried over. I lay for a long time just thinking. It was restful to be lying on my side. But after a time this position became painful, and, pushing with my feet, I rolled over again on my back; then, I found, by kicking with my feet, I could hitch myself along on the floor. I did this for some time, going in a circle, but it bumped my head and strained me in the neck.

Once I cut my head on a protruding piece of flint and could feel the blood trickle in my hair. Then the thought came to me, if I could get my wrists over this point of flint I might use it as a knife to cut the bandage. So I hitched myself along as before, but found that my head soon struck against a wall. So I had to turn and get at it sideways. It seemed an hour before I felt the flint gouge in my wrists—my back was all bruised with dragging over it—but, in time, I really had myself adjusted and was sawing the bands across the flint. It was only after steady patience that they yielded; my hands were free; I could take them from my back. Now I could sit up, since my hands were not beneath me, and it was after a little thought that I drew my bowie knife and cut the bands of cloth that bound my head and drew out the roll of cloth from my mouth. Then I cut the cloth that bound my feet and I stood up and felt myself free.

They say that it was when man first stood erect he received his reason, and it was certainly the case then with me. I knew now what the voices meant, all of them. I was somewhere near the bottom of the shaft. Mr. Duncan had come down first to find me, had been knocked down and his body dragged away, then Don Pablo had followed with his swearing, and he had been allowed to walk away. Then Lawson had called down the shaft, and, yes, he had been shot at from the bottom. Whether he had been hit I could not conjecture, it was probable he had not been, but only frightened. It was probable, too, he had gone for Miguel and Carlos and that I would hear

them soon again. I tried my voice and shouted "Lawson," but my voice seemed to come back as from a wall. I put out my hands to feel, and sure enough the wall was there. Then I tried to the right; there was vacancy; then left and there was vacancy too; then behind and again I struck the rock. I was in a passageway, a gallery of the mine.

You will think me very stupid when I tell it, but all this time I had not thought to strike a light, though I had matches and my pockets were full of candles. I laughed at myself actually for the blunder. How the light hurt my eyes at first as it lit up the darkness, but such a little way! However, I began walking along the passage, but found there were constant places to turn; it was a labyrinth, a network of passages. I realized that I might wander around for days in this way, coming back again and again to the same spot, and as a matter of fact I soon returned to the place from which I started, for I saw my bandages lying on the ground. Then a thought came to me to make use of them. I sat down and tore the cloth in narrow strips which I knotted together and wound into a ball of twine. Perhaps I remembered the silken clew of King Henry II, for I had read the story of Rosamond and her bower. I noticed in tearing up the cloth that it was a pair of the wide, flowing drawers worn by the Mexicans, and I was even amused at the idea. With my cotton clew once in working order I set out again to find the shaft. Round and round, back and forth I went, and when I found I was doubling on my trail I would pick up, rewind and

try anew. I roamed here till a full candle burned out, then I lighted another and went back to try again. This time I said I would try to go crooked, and I purposely turned sharply back and to my right every time a new passage presented itself going in that direction. Soon I found myself in a wider gallery leading upward and I stumbled along, leaving my white trail. After some walking up grade the way became more level, then the gallery became narrower and narrower, then terminated in a hole just enough for one man's body, so I lay down, pushing my candle out in front of me, and crawled along slowly like a mole.

CHAPTER XI

THE TREASURE CHAMBER

THE passageway proved to be a short one and I soon emerged into a chamber with piles of glittering light on the floor which I found to be reflections of my candle on the rounded surface of nuggets of gold. I need hardly say that this wealth did not move me; indeed I did not even count the heaps. I sat down on one and found it fairly comfortable; the nuggets were about the size of beans and the conical pile gave comfortably under me not unlike the springs in the seat of a chair. I held my light aloft to scan the chamber, and found it to be about eight feet to the ceiling, which was slightly arched up from the sides and seemed to have a hole in the top. I was speculating on this as a possible means of exit when I heard a heavy rumble as of some door sliding, and a man's legs swung down in the opening, the long, sinewy legs of old Miguel. I recognized the moccasins at once; I had furnished him with the thongs with which to tie them. His blue overalls were slipped up to his knees and he did not have the usual full white drawers underneath.

So it was *his* drawers with which I was bound and left in the labyrinth. Perhaps left to die if chance so ordered. I realized my desperate need of self-

control. I realized that my life depended on my ready wit and action. As the old Indian had once thrown me blindly into the flood, careless of whether I lived or died, so now he would sacrifice me if it served his purpose, if my death was needed for the preservation of this treasure. I had been brought up on Don Pablo's maxim to always keep one's self under control before a Mexican, to consider them merciless if they got the upper hand. This past and present suddenly welded themselves together, and from a timid boy I seemed suddenly to become an aged man. I waited calmly till Miguel had dropped down to the floor before I spoke, but I held the candle so that he could see me where I stood.

"You are late, Miguel," I said coldly.

He seemed to be convinced it was my spirit.

"I had to wait till Lawson was asleep," he half gasped, but buoyed up by the impulse of his mission.

"What time is it now?"

"An hour before dawn."

"Is Lawson in the upper camp with the animals?"

"No, he sent Louis up there. He and I stayed below with the mine."

He sank down on his knees and began to pray. I could see he still thought I was a spirit.

I realized that I must take advantage of his fears before his reason should return to him.

"Lift me up, Miguel," I commanded.

"I can't touch you?" he said, shivering and groaning.

I thought of the charm in my pocket. The evening before I had put a thong through it and made it ready

to hang around my neck. I took it out and held it up before him.

"The ancient gods have restored me to the flesh. Look, I, too, am a guardian of their treasure." As I spoke I put the cord over my head and the charm settled down on my breast. It was warm, of course, from being in my pocket, but the warmth seemed to affect me very strangely. I was frightened at the change that came over me. It was as if sudden manhood had been given me. Not the manhood that looks into the future, but rather that which holds past ages in its care.

"Touch me, Miguel," I said softly.

He still trembled, but he reached out his hand.

I took it. "Give the other hand," I said. As he did so I drew his hands to my breast until I felt his fingers grasp the charm.

"You must swear to obey me, Miguel."

"Swear? Don Clinto!"

He had never called me Don before, nor had any of the Mexicans, and my heart leaped as I felt the power accorded.

"Swear, Miguel."

It was fortunate that I did not speak this time in Spanish, but in the ancient Indian language of his people. I had learned a few words as a child, but at this time I had supposed they were forgotten; only the one word of the old man on his deathbed I knew was always vivid in my memory. It was fortunate that the use came to me now, for again I repeated it very softly:

"Swear, Miguel."

"I swear," he murmured and his hands clutched on the charm. He rolled out a lot more in the language that I did not understand, but I waited till he was through with the chanting, and then taking his hands I gently unclasped them.

"It was not for naught that you saved me from burning, Miguel," I said. "Nor that you found that the waters would not let me perish though you threw me far out into the flood. Now the earth itself has protected me in her bowels and I wear her hidden emblem on my breast."

I could see that he was conquered, was subdued, but I was not sure I could keep him in his credence. Fortunately his curiosity gave me a hint.

"How did you come here, Don Clinto?" he said. "I left you on the other side of the labyrinth."

"It was the ancient god who took the bands from off my limbs," I said, "and more than that, he tore them into threads, he knotted them into a clew to lead me forth. Go back and take the trail up from the white men, lest they follow and learn the secrets of the mine. But first I would have food, for I am weak, Miguel; I think you have provision in your keeping."

As a matter of fact I had felt the loaf of bread beneath his shirt when I was standing close against him. It was his custom to wear the outer shirt very loose, but, bound in securely with a sash at the belt, this served as a storehouse for provisions and he often kept a crust handy there to serve him.

Without a word he drew forth the provision and

also put a canteen of water in my hand. I sat down on a pile of nuggets to refresh myself, and I could see he was hesitating about something, also something was in the recesses of his shirt.

"What is it, Miguel?" I asked of him, and he drew forth a little package wrapped in a handkerchief, a big red one, which I recognized and which was tied very neatly about the parcel.

"It is the copy of the betrayal," he said apologetically. "I thought it might have the clew to the labyrinth written in it, and so I felt it right to take it from him."

To my surprise it proved to be Mr. Duncan's notebook. I knew that he had it in his pocket when he went into the mine.

"Is he dead? Did you kill him?" I asked.

"No, no, Don Clinto, only stunned. God forbid that I should kill so kind a man, Don Clinto."

I slipped the book into my pocket. "I will see if it contains the clew to the labyrinth," I said. "Now go and gather up the clew that I followed."

"Will I see the ancient god?" he whispered awesomely.

"No, he will not appear again. He has left the mine in our hands, Miguel."

The old man nodded and proceeded to crawl through the hole, and I had hardly finished my crust when he returned with the strings neatly wound in a ball.

I was about to prepare to depart when Miguel suddenly asked me about the betrayal. "Did it contain the 'one and two'?" he asked significantly.

He said this "one and two" in the Indian language and I immediately knew it was the clew to the labyrinth from the mysterious way in which he spoke it.

"I will look," I said. "You hold the candle," and, taking the little book, I turned the leaves till the serpentine inscription came to view.

Miguel put his finger quickly over it. But I lifted it gently one side. "Let me read first," I said, "then we will destroy it," and in all things he let me have my way. The account was not long, only notes, excerpted directions for finding the mine; at the end only one item that was significant—one thing that I did not already know—"there is a tradition that the mine is connected with the Casa Blanca by a subterranean passage as well, but this is not known to be certain."

I read this aloud to Miguel, and he nodded with great satisfaction.

"The betrayer was not a priest," he said softly. "But even so, may the Lord show him mercy."

We folded up the book and I put it in my pocket. "Now lift me up, Miguel," I said, "for the dawn will come, and we shall be discovered."

It was the final test of my power over him, but I did not waver, nor did he seem to hesitate a moment. "Up, son," he said, taking me in his arms and pushing the heavy slab aside.

I came out from the tomb-like structure in Casa Blanca as I had expected, and the blessed dawn of heaven was in the east. Miguel was out after me and softly rolling the slab into place when a rifle shot rang

out from the camp below and the voice of Lawson, half crying, half cursing, said:

“Take that, you copperhead, you devil,” and we knew the Apaches were upon us.

CHAPTER XII

THE APACHES

I THINK Lawson must have been glad to see us, though he expressed neither pleasure nor surprise.

"Take that gun, Clint, and pepper the rattlesnakes. That's yours, Miguel; watch on this side."

He was in a little room-like fortification made of piling up our baggage, tents and saddles. The back of this, the side toward the Casa Blanca, was left open so that it was a very simple matter for us to enter. As we ran down we could see the Apaches coming up the slope, creeping behind the rocks and shrubs for shelter. Lawson had shot one, but not killed him; he was trying to hobble away. I could not help feeling sorry for him a little. He was like a wild beast that was wounded and only thought of hiding his head. Our coming proved a definite check to their attack, for when they saw us issuing from the Casa Blanca they doubtless thought our other men might follow. They had probably made sure the night before that only Lawson and Miguel were in the camp, but now, when they saw reinforcements, they stopped to take a second consultation.

"Have you heard from Carlos?" asked Miguel.

"I only just waked up myself this minute," replied Lawson. "I thought you had gone to the upper camp."

"I was up there," said Miguel, nodding backward. "I was getting Don Clinto from the mine."

"And Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan?" asked Lawson.

Miguel only shrugged his shoulders for reply. That means the Spanish *quién sabe* (who knows?) and blocks the way to further inquiry always.

"Hungry, Clint?" asked Lawson. "You'd better eat; it will make your aim steadier when they come again." He himself began to munch a piece of bread.

"Miguel gave me bread," I answered, getting my cartridge belt adjusted. I did not tell him that I could not have eaten to save me. My jaws, I think, would positively have refused their office.

"I think there are only six of them," said Lawson. "We can handle them all right if they haven't sent a force up for the animals."

"Apaches usually take one point at a time," said Miguel calmly. "Caramba!" and he took a shot with his rifle. "Missed," he added regretfully when the smoke had cleared a little. "I just saw his hair and eyes above that rock."

We could see now that the wounded man was dying. His legs appeared behind a projecting ledge and they were kicking convulsively in the sand.

"Only five now," said Lawson, watching for a moment and then fastening his teeth in another piece of bread.

"If they start for the upper camp we can take them in the back," said Miguel.

"Yes, but they will hardly attempt to do that. The real danger is when Carlos comes down, for French

Louis will run like a whitehead. We have got to make ready for a sally if we hear the tramp of the horses."

"Maybe Carlos will be looking out; he surely must have heard the shots," I suggested.

"He may have. I should like to shoot again, only I don't like to waste the ammunition. I am curious to know whether those reds there have any cartridges, for, so far, they have not cracked a cap. They have rifles; that I know, but the government furnishes them; they bring them down when they leave the reservation. Wait, we will put up a dummy."

He began arranging a hat on a stick, making a face under it by knotting up the cook's dish towels and making features on it with a stray piece of charcoal.

"Lie flat now," he said when it was ready, and he cautiously poked it over the fortification.

Ping! came a bullet in an instant, and then thud! in a case of canned tomatoes. We could hear the gurgle of the juice running out of the can and smell the fresh acid in our nostrils.

"That is not a bad shot for an Apache," said Lawson as he pulled the hat down as if dodging. "A little low, but that is better than high. They usually shoot high and wild as well."

I was uneasy about the leaking can of tomatoes; the dripping juice reminded me of blood.

"We'd better keep easy and see what they do," said Lawson. "Our bulwarks are not very thick and one of their bullets might get through a thin place."

I was proud of Lawson to see him so cool. It was

different from the fear he showed when he discovered the sign of the yucca leaves. I have learned since that men are always fearless when under action. It is only their imagination that really frightens them when they are still held in ignorance of the danger.

The sun came up and still we waited. Lawson had quite finished his breakfast and Miguel sat as motionless as a statue. How I longed for Don Pablo at that time.

At length Lawson began to get restless. "I should like to chase them out from behind that ledge," he said. Then after deliberating a little, "I think if I could get down the slope fifty feet I would be in range. I wonder if I could take an aparejo."

Now an aparejo is a Mexican pack-saddle; we had several of them in our fortifications. One consists of two large pillowlike cushions sewed together at an edge to throw over the mule's back. These cushions are made of leather stuffed with close-packed grass, so stiff and heavy they will easily stand on edge, and V-shaped they make a fairly good shield. There is even a hole in the center to shoot through, but the trouble is there is a weak spot right in front, the point that fits over the mule's back.

"I think I can fix that," said the ingenious Lawson. He took some pack rope from the harness and bound round the thin strip in the center, wedging in flat-ways some of Mr. Duncan's books that he tumbled out of the first box that lay handy. Even the favorite copy of Lord Byron was slipped in. I hardly sighed as I saw it put to the sacrifice. "We will buy him another

if he is alive," said Lawson. "If he is dead he will not bother us about it."

I was interested in all this preparation, but Miguel never once gave it a glance. All the time he was gazing on the ledge where the Apaches lay hidden, but ready to give a bullet at the least sign.

"Now don't watch me, Clint, watch them, and shoot if you see a show of one anywhere." This from Lawson, who now, flat on his belly, his rifle kept close to his side, began to hitch along sideways outside of our fortification, keeping the aparejo standing up in front of him, moving it by little jerks that were but inches, and always keeping his body stretched in range. I tried to school myself to keep my look on the enemy, but could not in spite of myself forbear an occasional glance. He was managing his movable fortress so cleverly and I could see now he had the muzzle of his rifle thrust out of the little loophole in the middle.

Pretty soon he gave a shot and at the same time an Apache leaped up in plain view, giving vent to a terrible cry of pain. We thought afterward Lawson had him in the fleshy part of the leg behind, for when he ran we saw the blood flowing from him.

By this time things were growing very exciting, and to add to it we heard the tramp of the horses on the hillside and a cry from Carlos which was followed by a shot.

At this juncture the Apaches broke and ran in utter rout, all three of us standing and shooting after them. We did not hit any of them, however, and down the slope they scuttled like rabbits, getting away into the

dry cañon whence they had come. We all of us ran down to their dead comrade. Just then Carlos came up with a rush and a shout, and while we were looking on the victim daubed with clay, who seemed not in any way a fellow creature, we were startled by a volley of rapid shots from behind us and the sing of the bullets over our heads. We looked all about us in amazement and wondered if a new horde was upon us.

CHAPTER XIII

FRENCH LOUIS

WHEN Carlos was bringing down the horses he had seen the Apaches crouched behind the ledge and with foolhardy courage had rushed forward, telling Louis to look after the herd. It seemed Louis had been leading the bell mare and she, becoming nervous with the shooting, had wheeled around and in some way dragged him from his horse, and succeeded in getting him very much excited. When he got up the horses had left him and he now felt himself at the mercy of the savages. A glimpse of us down by the ledge only added to his frenzy, for it did not occur to him we were his friends. He hastily drew his two revolvers and fired off both of them in rapid succession, making twelve shots in all. Then without stopping to reload, indeed throwing the weapons from him, he took a short cut down the precipitous rocks toward Casa Blanca, to avoid the ledge, which was more in the line of the road, and, making both arms and legs work with great violence, he half tumbled, half ran toward the ruin, blowing and wheezing and grunting like a wild pig, expecting every moment to be seized and scalped, altogether a most ludicrous spectacle.

We would have smiled even if the Apaches were

still on us; but, relieved as we were from the strain of our fear, we burst into wild shouts of laughter.

"Run, Louis; run for your life," called out Lawson as the poor fellow, picking himself up from a double somersault over a bank, was gathering himself together for the effort.

Lawson's jeer seemed to give new intent to his terror, and, notwithstanding that he must have heard our laughter, he seemed to think it was the mocking of the savages, for with one glance toward the camp, now deserted, he wheeled off, passing behind the Casa Blanca, and with a final desperate effort dashed across the causeway and disappeared in the entrance of the mine.

"Clint and I will tame him down and get him to cooking," said Lawson after we had rested from our laughter. "And, Miguel, you and Carlos bring in the animals, for the Apaches will give us another brush and we want to keep together and be watchful."

Miguel went off to do as he was bid, for we all accepted Lawson as commander. He and I crossed the causeway once again, reached the cavern, and looked about for Louis, but not a sign of him anywhere could we see.

"Can it be he has jumped down the shaft?" said Lawson, beginning to look serious.

The rope was still hanging from the pulley as it had been left after Don Pablo's descent.

"Louis," called down Lawson, bending over the shaft. But neither of us had hope of any answer. Lawson took hold of the rope. "Why, it swings heavy

as if there was something at the bottom," he said. "Look out how you lean over. There's some one down there with a rifle, it seems."

I reached over and pushed on the rope, which seemed rigid and yielded very little. A faint moan came up from below.

"Is it possible he is hanging on the rope? His arms surely could not hold his weight so long."

"If he took a twist around with his leg," said Lawson. "I have heard Louis say he has served before the mast."

"Let's pull him up," I suggested.

"We aren't strong enough; we'll have to wait for the Mexicans."

"We might put a weight on this end."

"What have we got that is heavy?"

"Take a ditty bag and fill it up with stones."

"You're all right, Clint," said Lawson, looking at me proudly. "Run and get one and I will call down again."

I took my own ditty bag from the wall of our fortification and dumped my clothes out in the tent. Then I ran back across the causeway, picking up stones as I went.

"I think he's all right and sitting on the bar," said Lawson. "At least he seems to realize who I am, and is as anxious to come up now as he was to get down. I'll bet his hands are well blistered."

It was not long till I had the ditty bag ready and we tied it on the end of the rope.

"I'll call down and tell him about it," said Lawson,

"for when he meets it in the middle of the shaft he is liable to think it is a ghost and jump off the thirty feet into the bottom."

At last he seemed to make Louis understand and we were conjured in the holy name to heave away. With the aid of the counterweight we could pull very well, but he was a sad sight when we hoisted him from the blackness and swung him out over the edge. The sweat and blood were making channels down through the mud that besmeared his features, his eyes still had a wild light of terror, and his hands were a mass of bleeding flesh, the rope had burned them so in his haste in slipping down.

"You're all right though, Louis," said Lawson feelingly. "I had no notion it would scare you to call out that way. I will help you peel the potatoes for dinner and the Apaches are all ten miles off by now."

"I didn't think of the devil down there in the mine till I got to the bottom, and then I couldn't think of anything else," said Louis. Then coming to his senses a little, "But, Mr. Clint, I thought you were in the mine. Where are Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan?"

"Still down there. Probably lost in some of the galleries. And, Lawson, if you think we are safe from the Apaches I'll go down and take a look and try to find them."

Lawson only stared at me dazedly. "Why, Clint! Well, you are cool about it."

I felt a wave of shame flush across my face that

he should think I was so much braver than I really was. Still I did not like to tell him that there was no enemy concealed in the mine, for then he would be free to go down and investigate, and it was my desire to get everybody out of the mine, not into it. I must get them out and started back for home. So I had to let him labor under the mistake, but I made it as easy for him as I could.

"Everything was quiet there this morning when I came up, and it seems that everything is quiet now. I will take the dark lantern; you know we brought one. I saw it in Don Pablo's tent. I will also take plenty of candles and matches and perhaps I had better take some bread and water. I am afraid Mr. Duncan may be hurt."

Lawson only looked at me strangely. "Well, Clint, you're your own master," he said, "and if you say so I'll surely let you down. But the nerve you have, my boy," and here he stopped. "Why, I wouldn't go down that hole for a million dollars."

I hurried to get my materials together, for I wanted him to take Louis into his care. A bag of things slung about my neck, I stepped over the bar and swung out.

"Lower away, Lawson," I said cheerfully, "and then bandage Louis's hands and help him get the dinner. I may not come up for some hours, so you don't need to stay here by the shaft. Just come every hour or so and call over. Now good-by, and tell Miguel not to worry."

Lawson looked at me as if he were dreaming, but

he lowered away as I said. Indeed, I had now no horror of the descent and I was eager to be searching for my friends. As for the mine, I felt it was my own. I had never so much owned a thing all my life. I am not sure that I ever have since.

CHAPTER XIV

DEFIANCE

BEFORE descending I had looked at my compass and then slipped it into my pocket; I wished to make sure of the reading and to try to preserve the knowledge of where I was. I found that Casa Blanca was due north from the shaft, and I suspected the mine must swing to the eastward, for I saw that if any galleries led due south they would soon intersect the chasms I had seen from the upper camp, which, itself, lay but slightly toward the west, and that over a cañon of some width. I was surprised therefore to find the main galleries leading due south, and I suspected Don Pablo had gone in that direction. I first searched the network of channels about the shaft itself, laying down my cord as I proceeded in the hope of finding some trace of Mr. Duncan, for I knew Miguel had not dragged him very far. By some good fortune the light of my lantern flashed on a bright point on the ground, and stooping over I found it to be a button, a brass one, such as are put on the denim jackets of the miners, and I remembered this was the kind Mr. Duncan wore. I called out, and searched carefully all the neighborhood, paying out my cord to make sure that no passageway escaped me, but no

further trace of the antiquary could I find, and I returned now to the main southern gallery, carefully taking up and rewinding my string. By this time I began to feel so much at home in the mine that I felt I could move without my compass. Moreover, on this side, there was no labyrinth such as I had met with the night before, and I decided that it was only to the northward to protect the entrance of the passage through the causeway. Nor did I forget the little Indian clew of "one, two" that Miguel had given me, and I determined to make use of it later on. For the present I was content to pursue my way southward, and it was with a cheerful heart that I kept up my calling:

"Mr. Duncan, Don Pablo! It is Clint. Mr. Duncan, Don Pablo, Don Pablo!"

Nor did I wait long for an answer, which first came to me like the sound of running water. I hurried on and kept calling, "It is Clint," for fear they might think it was an enemy. To my surprise I found the passage getting light, and then I knew that I was coming to one of the chasms and I broke into a run along the road, calling out at every jump, half from joy and half in fear of getting bullets from Don Pablo's rifle. As the light increased I found it even dazzling, and I came into the flare of open day. I was in a big room, one side of which opened outward to the chasms. The pink granite towers were seen across, but what delighted me most was the vision of Mr. Duncan and Don Pablo, the first in a condition extremely merry, brought on by Miguel's brandy, as



I suspected, and the second also really glad to see me, which gave my heart more comfort than I can tell.

It is easy to imagine our excited exclamations and the eagerness of their questions as to where I had been. I found myself in a quandary from the first, but I said that Miguel had helped me out, that everything was all right in the camp, that I had brought them breakfast, which I set about arranging. There was a stone bench, or balustrade, on the outside of the chamber, and, what was more strange and still more delightful, a great shallow bowl of water in one corner which was kept filled from the dripping mist of a waterfall, the same one that leaped from the little valley of our upper camp, I conjectured. I talked of this, and a dozen other things, Mr. Duncan joining in with me in merry fashion and even sitting down to begin to eat. But when I looked at Don Pablo my heart failed me, for he was standing in the middle of the great chamber, his arms lightly folded, as he regarded me, an angry glitter gathering in his eyes and a curl of contempt and hatred on his lips.

"Come, Don Pablo," said Mr. Duncan, laughing uneasily. "Ganymede has brought the ambrosia to the gods."

"Your Ganymede seems to have more the manners of a jailor's wench," replied Don Pablo. "I prefer to eat my breakfast above ground."

"Why, McClintock, what's the matter?" said Mr. Duncan, staring at me, a bit of bread poised, waiting, at his open mouth.

"I didn't mean to be offensive, sir," I stammered.

"What is it, Don Pablo?" said Mr. Duncan. "I stake my life on it the boy's heart is in the right."

"I would ask him a few questions first," replied Don Pablo.

"Well, you surely do not wait for our permission. And, McClintock, you'll answer him truthfully, I'll swear to that. Why, my own honor rests on you, my boy."

There was a silence fell over our room then. A silence is more in a cavern. But I looked around a moment on the great rose-lighted space, for the reflected sunlight was filling it with color, and in a vague sweet way I cannot describe, the feeling began to come over me that I was not any longer in the hacienda to be domineered by its master. I was now really come into my heritage. I was the guardian and keeper of the mine and its treasure house. Not that I should ever take one nugget of those huge piles for myself, but they were mine to guard, my right was given by the ancients, and immediately I saw these two men as they were, Mr. Duncan who would be ruined by a fortune, and Don Pablo who already had more than he could use, but was in a rage now because his will was thwarted. Perhaps it was partial weakness that overwhelmed me, I was slightly dizzy with the magnitude of the change that had come over me; at any rate I sank back on the stone bench or balustrade without considering that Don Pablo still was standing. I had never made so bold in his presence I think before, and it was the last insult to his pride already wounded.

"Stand up, you whelp!" he roared with an oath. I thought for a moment he would strike me. Perhaps if I had cringed he would have done so, though I think Mr. Duncan would have prevented him. However that may have been, I cannot guess, but I did not cringe, and a brave man is ever impressed with calmness. I hardly know how the words came to me, but I could hear my voice was sounding clear and firm.

"I will stand up, Don Pablo, but not because you command me. I will stand up and wait till you sit down."

"And what has changed you in a night, if I may ask it?"

"In the night I have become the guardian of the mine."

CHAPTER XV

THE CAMPAIGN

MR. DUNCAN sent up a loud shout of laughter.

"What the devil has got into the boy?" he said. "Here, McClintock, I drink to the majesty of your office," and he tipped up the canteen to his mouth. "Water," he said, disgusted, putting it down. "It is an insult not to drink the toast in brandy."

Even Don Pablo himself was led to smile and I was taken down that they made so light of my seriousness. I had been suddenly put on my honor, and when I stated the position that to me seemed so serious I was laughed at as being a ridiculous boy.

"And who has elected you to a position so exalted?" asked Don Pablo, who now humored my fancy. "Was old Miguel the one to constitute a quorum or are Carlos and Lawson in the game?"

"Lawson knows nothing of it," I said hastily, "nor Carlos either unless Miguel has told him. No, I elected myself."

"And when did this change of heart take place? You seemed placable enough yesterday," sneered Don Pablo.

I realized that I was giving everything away, that Don Pablo was pumping me as he called it, but Mr. Duncan had put me on my honor and his confidence had

touched me to the heart. I wondered how they knew Miguel was implicated, but I was too proud to allow them to think that he had conquered me.

"It was early this morning that I took the vow," I said doggedly. "I believe it was the hour before dawn."

"A fitting season for vows," laughed Mr. Duncan. "Really, Clint, boy, the ancient spirits of the mine have entered into you."

"Maybe so," I said, as half believing. And I could see that Don Pablo was becoming vexed, for he realized that it was difficult to win me over.

"And what are you going to do with this treasure that you have discovered?" he said sarcastically. "It will be difficult for you to get it away single-handed."

I could see he was assuming the treasure to surprise me into acknowledging it, but I was getting more wary as I went on, and this time I was able to cope with him.

"If any treasure should be discovered," I said, "I will only do my best to protect it. It belongs to me no more than it does to anybody."

"What a noble spirit is developing in our hero," sneered Don Pablo.

"Nay, nay, Clint is a good lad even though he is a little cracked," put in Mr. Duncan. "And I honor his loyalty to the mine."

"But how are you going to protect your rights?" said Don Pablo, again allowing me the point in order to gain further information.

He was so cold and contemptuous toward me that

I only began to blubber like a baby. I don't believe he had ever seen me cry before and I could feel he was moved by it in some way.

"Come come, boy," he said not unkindly. "We will go up into the air and then we will talk matters over, no doubt we can come to some satisfactory arrangement. I have no appetite for breakfast in this hole."

I saw that he had me fast this time, for the notebook had told me they suspected the treasure house under Casa Blanca.

Their first move would be to break the tomb open and the game would then be in their hands. I made no answer therefore but kept a dogged silence. I was determined that I would not guide them out.

Don Pablo was wise enough not to try to persuade me. Though had it not been for the presence of Mr. Duncan, I suspect that he would have hurled me into the abyss. I could see his hand shake as he picked up the lantern but his voice was quite steady as he said, "Come on, Mr. Duncan. We will go to the shaft. I see our young guardian is getting on his dignity so we will not offer to show him the way out."

Mr. Duncan hesitated for a moment, looked at me as if meditating a remonstrance, then gave up the idea, drew a flask from his pocket and took a swallow, having first offered Don Pablo the favor; then he cut himself a half loaf of bread and stuck it into his pocket, then lighted a candle, still hesitating; then saying, "Better come on, Clint, be reasonable and come with us," he went out of the room after the ranchman, and so they left me alone there, half crying, feeling that I

had proved disloyal to the two strongest men I had ever known, men whom I had loved from my childhood, and all for what, for a fanciful superstition, for a loyalty to an old Indian, perhaps. I could never come to understand the reason, and the pitiful thing about it all was that I should fail. They would easily find their way to the shaft where Lawson would pull them out, meanwhile I could crawl back and beg them to take me with them. I was defeated, humiliated in my first stand before them. As for old Miguel, they would probably tie him up in future, and in this manner they would take us both home. I looked out at the pink towers across the chasm and suffered the bitterest moment of my life.

In time I began to review the situation and to wonder how they knew their enemy was Miguel. I had not revealed the fact that he was in the mine. It was Don Pablo who had calmly announced it. Then the memory of the brandy flask revealed it. The simple-hearted old fellow had undoubtedly felt sorry for Mr. Duncan after knocking him senseless, and, not daring to revive him at the time, had thrust the flask in his pocket or in his hand. He had probably knocked him down in a moment of impetuous excitement, not knowing at the time another way, and then he had stood ready at the entrance of the labyrinth with the determination to shoot or strike if Don Pablo turned toward the treasure house, but when his master had taken the opposite direction he had retreated through the subterranean passage of the causeway, leaving the outcome to chance and to time.

At all events I was glad that I had not been the betrayer of the secret, and I was sorry for kind-hearted old Miguel whose very pity would prove his undoing. With this poor comfort I slowly made my way back to the shaft, and seeing Lawson's anxious face peering over, I got on the bar and called to him, and he began to draw me up with great dispatch.

CHAPTER XVI

MANEUVER

"WHAT did Don Pablo say?" was the first thing I said in getting off. "Where is Miguel? Is Don Pablo in Casa Blanca?"

Lawson looked at me as if confused by the three questions.

"Why, Don Pablo is in the mine," he said at length. "And didn't he come up. Or Mr. Duncan?"

"Why, no one has come up except you."

Then I knew what had happened, there was still a chance. They had tried to explore the north side of the shaft, to see if they could discover the secret passage, and they had got confused in the labyrinth, or had they, like me, found the way to the treasure? All this flashed through my mind in an instant. I could see Lawson was looking at me, waiting.

"I saw them both below, they are all right. They came ahead, said they were coming to the shaft, but perhaps they are exploring farther in the mine."

Lawson drew a long breath of relief. "Well, I am glad they are not murdered," he said.

"Has Miguel come back?" I asked of him quickly.

"Oh, yes, some time ago. I told him to keep the animals here till after dinner in case of another attack

from the Apaches. But the grass is poor here, we'll have to take them back again to water. Well, I hope that Don Pablo will hurry up."

"You might stay and watch for him," I said. "I will go down and clear up the camp."

In reality I wanted to get word to Miguel. I wanted him to know the situation. In answer to my signal he approached and pretended to be busy with the saddles.

I waited till Louis was out of hearing, and then began, "I was in the mine. I saw them. They are all right, they know it was you because they recognized the brandy flask. They are probably in the labyrinth, now, looking for the passage. They know that you and I are against them."

A stolid look of determination came over him. "I will go down at once," he said briefly. "If they come to the shaft give three taps on the stone." With that he walked direct to Casa Blanca and disappeared within the doorway.

I looked to see if Lawson had remarked him; but, no, he was calling down the shaft. I spoke to Louis to distract his attention. "Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan will probably be up to dinner, I saw them in the mine, they said they were hungry."

No ruse could have been more successful for the cook was overcome with emotion, and if old Miguel had seen fit to sink into the ground before his eyes he would not have thought anything of it. "Don Pablo, Don Pablo, the saints be praised. Did he give any commands? The ragout is quite ready. I will add the paprica and a bay leaf. Did you tell him I had killed

an Apache? That I rescued the camp from their hands?"

I was glad that he could take such comfort from his fright, and soon went up to join Lawson in the grotto.

"It is strange they don't show up," he said.

"They are probably exploring the tunnels, there is a perfect network of them," I replied.

Lawson looked at me sharply. "See here, Clint," he began, "you have never told me what happened down there. Now I begin to see through a few things. There wasn't anybody down there after all. But who was it fired up the shaft?"

"I got scared and fainted, I guess," I said. "Did some one fire out of the shaft? It seems Mr. Duncan fell into a hole and got lost, and Don Pablo found him somewhere in the mine."

"I'd like to have a look at that mine," said Lawson. "You didn't fire the shot up, did you, Clint?"

"No, no, I was lying off one side. I couldn't move even. Why should I fire upward?"

"Well, I don't know why anybody should," considered Lawson. "But the bullet singed the hair off my eyebrows. I thought there was a gang of robbers in that den, but you don't think there was anyone, now do you?"

"I didn't see anybody I could swear to," I said, "but I thought I heard footsteps and breathing."

"Your own heart pounding, I suspect. One gets fooled with the echoes in a mine." He went on to relate all that had happened after my scream, but I was so distracted with worry I could not listen, for I

keep thinking, what if Don Pablo should find the secret passage? Would Miguel kill him as he put his head out of that hole? The thought of it filled me with terror, but how would it be better if they came back to the shaft? Then they would go down from Casa Blanca.

"I'm worried about those Apaches," Lawson was saying, "they may come back to-morrow morning and we can't keep the animals down here. Why can't Don Pablo come up and take care of his property instead of mooning about in old deserted mines? Why, if it's deserted mines he wants, let him go to Arizona, the hills are full of them. And there is no worry of Apaches. But what does a cowman know about mining anyway?" and he went on with a long lingo again.

What should I do, what should I do to keep these men from murdering each other, I kept thinking, not listening to a single thing he said.

"The thing to do and the thing I am going to do," said Lawson after an exasperating wait and repeated callings down the shaft, "is to move all the things up to the upper camp and fortify there before dark. It's foolish being split in two parts, we haven't got men enough to allow it. That Louis is worse than no man for a fight."

Then it was an idea struck me. "Why not move Louis and the kitchen down into the mine? There's a big room down there and plenty of light. It opens up into a cañon on one side, has a big pool of water and everything. We could take down some wood to build a fire."

Lawson looked at me as if he thought my mind was unsettled, but I hastily described to him the cavern facing outward.

"It was probably the quarters of the miners in the olden times; we could take down Don Pablo's bed and Mr. Duncan's. They will not give up this mine till they have explored it thoroughly, as you can see," I argued, and Lawson was forced to admit that I was right.

"Do you think we could get French Louis down?" he said.

"Why not?" said I, getting enthusiastic. "Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan are there. Just tell him how safe it will be from the Apaches."

"Not a bad thought, Clint, on the whole. By George, boy, you will grow up to be a general."

It was remarkable how quickly everything was arranged; but Lawson was a man of great expedition, he never made a false move when he undertook a piece of work, and he had the faculty of beginning at the beginning and going through, doing his thinking on his feet and while he was working. He was vexed at first because he couldn't find Miguel.

"He's probably asleep up on the ledge," he said disgusted. But he called Carlos as the animals were quiet and soon he had the baggage separated and ready; provisions, cooking utensils, even a portion of the ragout were put aside for them to take to the upper camp, while Don Pablo's things and Mr. Duncan's and my own were carried by Louis over the causeway together with his bed and beloved kitchen, the provisions

and the dinner all prepared. As for Louis himself he was delighted when he heard of the new quarters that awaited him. He didn't mind going down the shaft at all.

"And the Apaches will never get us there," he said; it was well known they would never venture underground.

I went down first to receive the things and show Louis the way. I felt all the honors of a host as I conducted him. And now all was ready, and still no word from Don Pablo. The labyrinth might serve its purpose after all.

"I will help you and Carlos pack," I said to Lawson when I had returned from the mine, "and I will wait here till Miguel comes back and send him after you. With the ditty bag for a counterweight I can arrange to pull myself up and down the shaft with a double rope. And I will be the messenger that runs between the two camps, so now you must hurry and eat your dinner."

"Isn't Louis afraid down there all alone?" asked Lawson.

"No, he is delighted with everything. I must show you. When Miguel comes you must come down in the mine."

"Clint, what's the matter with you?" said Lawson admiringly. "I have never seen you so interested and excited. Why, you are quite a man these days. And didn't I hear Miguel calling you Don Clinto?"

CHAPTER XVII

SUSPENSE

IT was with a great sense of relief that I saw Lawson and Carlos safely started for the upper camp, driving the animals before them. Everything had been removed from the lower camp, even Don Pablo's tent was taken down. Casa Blanca stood alone now, my own kingdom, and like the prince in a fairy tale I entered and gave three taps on the stone table with the butt end of my rifle which in my case should serve for a staff. Miguel was not long in showing his head, I could see he was anxious at my summons.

"All right, Miguel, the danger is over at the shaft for the present. Lawson and Carlos have taken the animals to the upper camp and Louis and the kitchen have been removed to the mine. You had better eat your dinner while waiting here and I will try to get Don Pablo out of the labyrinth. So far you have heard nothing of him in the passage?"

"Thanks to the good God," replied Miguel very reverently. "It would put me in eternal punishment if I did harm to the master."

"I will go to the labyrinth and try to get him back to the south hall. Watch here till I come again, Miguel."

"Yes, Don Clinto."

I was happy that he seemed to have such confidence in me and I hastened to descend into the treasure house, for while I had told Lawson I would descend the shaft by means of a double rope, I found on considering the matter that to make use of the shaft I must necessarily leave a rope hanging in it and it would thereby be advantageous to the others as well as myself, whereas it was my plan at present to keep them prisoners in the mine. I therefore changed my plans, drew up the rope from the shaft, stowed it in the treasure house and asked Miguel to carry down the two boxes of dynamite from Casa Blanca that I might use them to stand on when I wanted to open the stone door that led from the treasure house upwards. I carefully made myself familiar also with the sliding door; there were two in case of need of great precaution, one lying flat forming the bottom of the false tomb and one at the rear end which rolled sideways.

"I will use the 'one, two' clue to thread the labyrinth," I said. "Which way is it, now, we turn first?"

"To the left and always backward," said Miguel. "One, that is the first passage to the left; then two, that is the second passage to the right, and always turn backward on your shoulder and in a moment you are free from the mazes."

I assented and crawled into the manhole and was soon running softly but swiftly down the passage. How familiar it all seemed to me now, I liked the darkness better than the flutter of a candle. I kept my left hand brushing the wall which was smooth from the pressure of many fingers. Soon I felt the first opening

to the labyrinth and turned sharply backward, at the same time extending my right hand; "one, two," turn, and so on till I was at the bottom of the shaft. It was while standing there waiting, that I heard Don Pablo's voice.

"Did you stand still? I swear you have moved."

"I have not budged from my tracks," said Mr. Duncan.

"Then what cursed charm is it that brings me back to the same place? I can't find my way out for the life of me."

It was always when encountering Don Pablo that I realized the untenableness of my situation. If I should go to him I knew he would not follow me, his pride would not permit him to do so. And still I felt a nervous dread as long as they were in the labyrinth for they might chance on the exit to the passage. I thought of Louis and ran to the south chamber. He was getting impatient about his dinner. I had promised him Don Pablo would soon come.

"He is near the shaft, now go and call him," I said. "Come on, I will show you the way."

"Why didn't you call him?" he questioned abruptly.

"Well, Louis, you see Don Pablo is vexed with me now. He will go into a passion if you even mention my name. Don't tell him that I am in the mine or that you have seen me, it will only set him cursing and spoil his appetite."

Louis was familiar with Don Pablo, and silently made ready to follow me. I gave him a candle and conducted him to the shaft.

"Now go in, only a few steps," I admonished, pushing him forward. "Don't turn or you will surely get lost. Then hold up your candle and call; you will hear them but don't move, just keep calling. It may take them some time to find you but don't move, just call out and hold up your candle."

I concealed myself in a passage and waited the result. I could already hear Don Pablo and Mr. Duncan. The labyrinth could hardly be more than fifty feet square, and I trembled as I thought of the one exit.

"Don Pablo," I heard Louis call. "Don Pablo, the ragout is waiting."

"Who is that?" came Don Pablo's hollow voice.

"Don Pablo, the ragout is waiting."

"It sounds like French Louis," said Mr. Duncan. "Has the Prince of Darkness put him in this hole?"

"Who is it?" again from Don Pablo.

"It's Louis. The ragout is ready."

"Ragout," said Mr. Duncan, "in the name of Autolycus, I should like a dish of that ragout now this minute."

"Come here," called out Don Pablo.

Now Louis did not dare disobey a command from Don Pablo no matter what had been my precautions and answering, "All right, sir," he was about to make the trial when I ran out and seized him by the jacket.

"You will get lost, stand still," I whispered.

Fortunately Mr. Duncan helped us out of the difficulty.

"Wait a bit, Don Pablo," he said. "If Louis comes

to us we are as badly off as we were before. Let him stand still and we will try to go to him."

"A good idea. Stand still, Louis!" shouted Don Pablo.

I could hear them wandering about in a circle, cursing at each newly encountered turn. I began to have some confidence in the wisdom of the ancients who had constructed that labyrinth. By what marvel had I found my way through it! All this time they were calling to Louis and all the time he was answering back, "Yes, Don Pablo." Sometimes they were near to him, sometimes far away, but never entirely out of hearing. It was a half hour before they came upon him and all three were too much enraged to feel much welcome. At length they emerged into the shaft. I was standing with but a single wall between us.

"Is Lawson there to draw us up?" asked Don Pablo.

"Lawson has gone to the upper camp with the animals, sir."

"In the fiend's name then how are we to go to your dinner?"

"Dinner is served in the south hall," said Louis grandly.

"And are you, too, crazy with all the others? What do you call the south hall?"

"I will lead the way," said Louis, starting across the shaft.

"Do you mean to say you have moved into the mine?"

"Yes, sir, may it please you, Don Pablo."

"Where is the rope that was hanging in the shaft?"

"I think Lawson has drawn it up, sir, so that the Apaches may not slide down."

"The Apaches?"

"The Apaches?" said Mr. Duncan.

"They attacked the camp before breakfast," said Louis calmly, "but they are gone now. I shot several with my pistol. Only one stayed behind dead," as if to be quite truthful. "But everything is down here now, your beds and provisions and everything. If you will follow, sir, the ragout is quite ready."

They did follow but with such a torrent of curses that I will not attempt to write what was said.

I slipped into the north entrance from the shaft. "One, two; one, two," I said as I ran along putting out first the left and then the right hand. From the passage I crawled into the treasure house, not forgetting to signal Miguel who was waiting. When I saw him with the stony look on his patient face, the look of one nerved to kill his fellow, I threw my arms around his neck and burst into sobbing.

"They are safe in the south gallery," I told him.

CHAPTER XVIII

"THOU SHALT NOT KILL"

WE sat quietly together for some time, enjoying our little dole of comfort from companionship. Things had been going through my head at such tremendous speed for the last twenty-four hours that I felt quite weak in this moment of let-up. It did not seem possible that it had been only twenty-four hours, when I considered all that had been crowded in them. And in another way it seemed but a minute, the time had passed by me so quickly. I looked at Miguel to make sure I was not dreaming and he too seemed awaking from deep sleep. He had continued to keep hold of my hand and the contact gave me wonderful consolation. After all, it was worth the sacrifice I had made to have the loyalty of this simple Indian's heart. My mind misgave me for the deception I had practised on him in the fear I had when I first met him in this treasure chamber.

"Miguel," I said softly.

"Yes, son."

"When I told you that the ancient god spoke to me, you did not understand it as it really was."

"How was it?"

"Why you know the god did not appear to my eyes, Miguel."

"How then?"

"He came into my mind and took control of me that way."

"It is all the same."

"And it was through my hands that the rags were torn and knotted and put down for a clew.

"Then who loosed the bonds?"

"It must have been the ancient god, Miguel, don't you think so, who put a sharp flint in the floor?"

"Perhaps."

"And who guided me through the labyrinth, Miguel, for I never could have done it of myself."

"Yes."

"You do not feel that I have lied to you then, Miguel, in saying that the ancient god did it?"

I trembled as he considered a moment. "You probably intended to lie, son," he said after a time, "but a higher power than you made it the truth."

"You trust me now, Miguel?"

"Yes."

We sat for another space of silence and the rest made me so comfortable and happy that I dropped off to sleep where I lay with my head upon a yielding pile of gold.

It must have been some time before he aroused me. "I will go through and see what they are doing," he said. "You may sleep on until my return."

"All right, Miguel," and indeed such a drowsiness had seized me that, while I was awake when he put his head into the manhole, I did not see his feet disappear.

He was sitting at my side at my next glimpse of consciousness.

"Well Miguel, did you see them?" I asked.

"Yes."

"And what were they doing?"

"Mr. Duncan was arranging his bedroom, hanging up his linen and his towels."

"And Don Pablo?"

"Just cursing."

"Will they try the labyrinth again to-day?"

"No, Don Pablo says he will look at the sky."

"He can't see it from the gallery, can he?"

"He has climbed out over the parapet. There is a little spot he can see."

"Do you think he will give up the mine, Miguel?"

"Not yet. He's only balked for a moment."

"Will he come back then to search for the treasure house?"

"Yes, but to-morrow, not to-day."

"I think I will stay here, Miguel."

"Yes, you can sleep to-night. I will join Lawson. We must look out for the Apaches in the morning."

"You will come back as soon as you can?"

"To-morrow, yes. Your rifle is ready?"

"You mean?"

"You must watch in the morning for intruders."

My heart sickened at the thought of their coming through.

"Can't we block up the hole, Miguel?" I said faintly.

He stopped to consider for some time.

"We might do that," he said thoughtfully. And then, "But suppose they should get out of the shaft or

attempt it. No, we want to be free to move back and forth. Wait, I will put in the two boxes of dynamite. If anybody starts to push them forward it will give you warning. I will put the labels on the other side so they will see what it is; they will then be very gentle about pushing them and there is hardly room in the hole to draw them back."

He lifted the two boxes accordingly and pushed them gently into the manhole. They really filled the space very well and put end to end made a double barricade.

"If I had a bar it would catch in the rock and hold them," he said, feeling around the inside of the hole.

"The barrel of my rifle might do it."

He stopped to consider again.

"Yes," he said. "I am afraid you would not have the courage to shoot. To a young man life is dearer than to an old one."

He accordingly unjointed my rifle and wedged the barrel securely in the opening of the hole.

"See how it comes out so," he said, showing me, "but from behind there is not any force that can push it. And they will hardly undertake to draw those boxes back. If they do it will give you time to join your rifle."

I felt very dreary at the thought of his leaving me, and he now began making preparations.

"Here is bread and a piece of dried beef," he said, "and a canteen of water. But where is your bed?"

"I had Louis carry it into the mine."

"You will have to sleep on the floor."

He reached up and pushed back the heavy stone slab.

"Let me go out, Miguel, just for a little air."

"There is danger of a shot from the Apaches."

"Just inside of the Casa Blanca."

"Very well. I will keep watch outside."

He crawled up. I handed him his rifle and he reached down and gave me his hand, so that I, too, scrambled into the light.

"Better only go to the door," he said cautiously. "They will hardly be waiting up here."

He himself walked coolly out from cover, but I remained in the doorway of Casa Blanca. The sun was setting. I could see the horses in the upland. Yes, I could make out Carlos and Lawson. Miguel signalled them that he would soon join them and they replied by waving their hats. Two days ago we had all been together in that camp and now we were separated; our leaders were prisoners underground. Was it my doing? And if so why was it? For the moment I was giving all up. I would tell Miguel that I resigned my commission. Surely Don Pablo would forgive us, even yet, if we only put the treasure in his hands. I went around to take Miguel's hand to tell him; as I did so I saw the serpentine inscription on the corner of the ruin of Casa Blanca; and while I knew it was nothing but my tears, the spiral seemed to twist as if in torment, and the other one seemed moving on my breast.

Just then Miguel returned, his face set like the stone face of an ancient.

"It is time to go back now, Don Clinto," and "Keep guard and watch," he said, as he let me down below.

Then I heard the heavy stones slide shut. I groped in the darkness till I felt a pile of the nuggets strike my feet. I sank down on it and thought it seemed for hours.

"I have been trying to serve my friends," I kept saying over and over, "and I seem to be serving nobody but the ancients. If I were far away, earning my living by honest labor, I think I would be the happiest boy in the world."

CHAPTER XIX

THE ARCHÆOLOGIST

I MUST have slept long and very deeply for when I awakened I did not realize where I was and Mr. Duncan was sitting beside me intent on a drawing he was making. "One and two, one and two," he was saying, "Left and then right, every time. Hello, McClintock, you awake? I say but those old fellows were clever. Now I have made rather a study of labyrinths and this is one of the neatest and simplest I have ever seen. Don Pablo could thunder around for a month, but this is a different matter from riding horses."

Gradually the situation was dawning on me. Mr. Duncan was seated on a pile of nuggets as happy as only an antiquarian can be.

"How did you get the dynamite out?" I asked.

"Pried the sides off the boxes and carried the sticks back a few at a time. It isn't safe to go dragging those boxes about. The Mexicans are altogether too careless."

"Is Don Pablo with you?"

"He's sleeping, sleeping like a log. That brandy I guess made me wakeful."

"What time is it?"

Mr. Duncan drew out his watch. "A quarter of five," he replied. "It must be getting light outside."

I could not think of a word to say.

"Those fellows made a good door, too. What a clever bit of vaulting that is now! I suppose this stone slides back in the groove, and there is a second door to close the side above; that is the end, of course, that slides. Now, how cunning it was of old Miguel to know it. Yes, I'll guarantee," he said solemnly, "that neither Miguel nor his father nor his grandfather, yes, back for five or six generations has ever seen this mine. The Indians are remarkable for the accuracy of their traditions. Now, civilized people will get a story mixed by passing it from one mouth to another, but not an Indian, never that. A man may hear a legend in his youth, he will not repeat it again till he is ninety and yet he will never miss a word. I'll warrant he ran through that labyrinth as quickly as if he had known it from childhood saying his one, two, and putting out the left hand and then the right and turning with the regularity of clockwork. Oh, my boy, there is no study in the world, no science, so perfect as the study of primitive men. It makes me turn against my own civilization. It does really. We have nothing to equal it, nothing."

"Are you going to tell Don Pablo?" I asked.

Mr. Duncan cocked his head on one side to consider. "Well really, McClintock, you ask a puzzling question. He would never appreciate the niceties of this thing, never. He would only have eyes for the treasure. Now the treasure has its beauties, I admit, but it's nothing compared to the science."

"It isn't our treasure just because we found it."

"Well, that's a question that would bear some discussion. I suppose, as Don Pablo bears the expense of the expedition, the treasure should be really his."

"Why, doesn't it belong to the ancients? Miguel wouldn't touch it for the world. His tribe has known of it always. It is not now discovered by Don Pablo."

"Well, there is a point I had not thought on; that, too, is worthy of consideration. But you say it belongs to the ancients. Now the ancients are in the Islands of the Blessed and there is no gold borne from this world to there."

"Do you want the gold, Mr. Duncan?"

He paused and looked at me in a puzzled way, scratching the tip of his ear softly.

"You see I am Scotch, McClintock," he said. "Is it possible that you have no Scotch in you?"

"You have told me only of Scotch honor, Mr. Duncan, of Scotch loyalty to the traditions handed down."

"But always to Scotch traditions, McClintock; we have never respected the traditions that were not Scotch."

I could see he was uneasy about his reasoning. "There have been some exceptions to that," he added.

"Do you need any of this gold, Mr. Duncan?" I asked of him after we had sat for some time in awkward silence.

"I see you know little of the world, McClintock," he answered. "It is a curious fact but nevertheless established that the less we need gold in this world the more eager we are to obtain it."

"What would you do with it if you had it?"

"Oh, don't ask me, my boy, such a question. I suppose I should go to the city and get into a debauch of liquor. You know my weakness. I would probably be fleeced in a fortnight and lie at the bottom of some gutter or other."

"Do you have money for your old age, Mr. Duncan?"

"Why, McClintock, you must know that is something of a private question to ask a man."

"It is only," I said getting on my knees before him, "it is only, Mr. Duncan, that I will work for you. Let me be your son, Mr. Duncan, we are both Scotch, it is the same blood we are. Let me work for you, I will do the meanest labor, I will slave for you. You shall never know want. And I will not annoy you nor rob you of your quiet. You can always live alone if you like. I will only bring my earnings always to you, or send them if you are living far away. Let me do it, Mr. Duncan, let me do it, and we will respect the ancient secrets of the mine."

He took my hands and looked at me wistfully. "You are a strange boy, McClintock, but Scotch, pure Scotch."

I tore open my shirt-front and exposed the charm to him. "I have sworn, Mr. Duncan, I have sworn."

Then a new light came into his eyes, a dearer light than that which the treasure had called up.

"What a pretty bauble," he said, taking it in his fingers fondly. "How long have you worn this, McClintock?"

"I found it in the upper camp, the first night, but it was here in the treasure house I put it on."

"Ah, here with the gold before your eyes. But perhaps you were right. It is worth more than the heaps of untouched nuggets. How smooth it is, what a delicate piece of handicraft, this is really a treasure, McClintock."

"I will hang it on your neck," I said impulsively. "It is yours. See, I give it to you, Mr. Duncan."

But he stayed my hands as I was holding them above his head. He brought them down slowly, very slowly. "You would bind me, too, with your foolish vow, McClintock."

"Nothing is foolish that happened so long ago. You have always taught me to reverence the prehistoric, Mr. Duncan."

"True, that is right," he said solemnly. "And with that on, you belong to the ancient order of the priesthood."

"I am really prehistoric now," I laughed. "You always said you would be interested in me if I were."

"True, true, and I admit an added charm. Not but that I liked you passably when you were modern."

"If it touches your breast you will feel the charm doubly."

"No, no," he said decidedly. "You will lose. You may need the strength of the talisman, McClintock."

"Do you really believe it is a talisman?"

"If I like to believe it, what harm does it do me?" he said irritably. "Of course as an ethnologist I don't believe it."

He sat for some time pondering deeply, his hands kept softly caressing the bit of malachite. At length he seemed to pull himself together.

"We must be practical, we must be practical, McClintock. But before that, let me put back the charm," and he hung the cord again around my neck.

I could see that he fingered it regretfully and yet I was glad, too, he had restored it to its place.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, McClintock," he said. "I'll keep out of this business for the present. We'll let Don Pablo work a day on his own lines, but would it go against your conscience now, I wonder, to tell me whether Miguel has some such charm?"

"Just like this, his father gave it to him."

"I see, and how long have you known that?"

I related to him all that I knew of the matter. Much the same that I have told here in these pages.

"And so you saw the drawing in my notebook. By the way, old Miguel must have my notebook."

"I will give it to you," I said and I drew it out of my pocket still carefully wrapped in the handkerchief.

"He takes good care of things, does old Miguel. That brandy now, I wonder if he had it from the ancients?"

This last idea seemed to amuse him greatly, and chuckling he crawled back through the manhole.

CHAPTER XX

DON PABLO

I REALIZED that I must speak with Don Pablo and that it was necessary to see him alone. I went out and sat at the foot of the shaft, thinking it would irritate him less than if I called on him in the south gallery. I had not long to wait for he soon arrived followed by Louis with a ball of twine, for it was his intention to try once more at the labyrinth.

"Where did you spend the night?" he asked briefly.

"In the mine, Don Pablo."

"I trust you have comfortable quarters?"

"I slept soundly enough on the ground."

"You may go back, Louis, and wait till I come," he said briefly, turning to the cook.

I trembled as I heard the man's footsteps getting fainter in the passage. I was now alone with Don Pablo.

"Well, what do you want, Clint?" he began bluntly.

"It does not belong to my position to tell you, Don Pablo, what I want, I am not sure that I have the right to want anything."

He seemed somewhat appeased at my answer.

"Why did you turn against me, Clint?" he asked.

"Sir, old Miguel would have killed you and Mr. Duncan and me, to protect his mine; it is his religion and he has sworn to do it."

"There are always two men in a killing," said Don Pablo. "Do you think, Clint, that I have never braved the rancor of a Mexican?"

"He knows the mine perfectly, he can run about barefooted in the dark. Of course he would not attack you openly. The very thought of harming you sets him all a-tremble for he is devoted to you as a dog is to his master."

"And like a dog he will come at my call to take his beating."

"In all things but this, Don Pablo, he will; but here he is an ancient priest sworn to guard. He would sacrifice all his own sons and grandsons even. The oath is strong."

"And how did he intimidate you?"

"You will laugh but I intimidated him. I did it by swearing fealty to the mine."

"You did that to save your life, you thought."

"To save life. I care little about my own."

"To save whose life, then, since you are so self-sacrificing?"

"There was yours, there was Mr. Duncan's, there was Miguel's."

"An Indian's life does not count."

"He saved my life in the very beginning. I owe him the favor in return."

Don Pablo did not answer for a time. I had never mentioned my origin before. Perhaps he was thinking of that night's massacre long ago on the sheep rancho. Or possibly he felt a shock of surprise that I should make so bold as to mention it. He showed no signs

when his voice began again, and we both of us sat in semi-darkness. The lantern was put down on the floor.

"Now you have delayed us a day with your meddling. How do you expect to save anyone's life by interfering further?"

"I have no plans for the future."

"Where is Miguel now?"

"I do not know."

"Where do you think he is?"

"He was at the camp with the animals last night. He expected to return this morning. He may be within a yard of us now listening and ready to strike."

"Come, Clint, I am not so easily frightened."

"He may be ready to strike me if I betray his secret."

"There is a secret then, you admit?"

"Why else should there be dissension among us?"

"Call it by its right name please, mutiny."

I did not care to irritate him with an answer.

"The secret, I suppose, is the treasure," he hinted, but to this again I did not give an answer.

"Can't you speak?"

If I said it was anything more than a secret it would be a secret no longer.

"How many Apaches did you see yesterday?"

"Lawson saw six."

"And Louis killed one?"

"It was Lawson who killed him. He also wounded another."

"Does he think they will come back?"

"He thinks they are waiting for another opportunity to make attack. When they came yesterday they thought he was alone."

"But he was not?"

"Miguel and I were near by, they had not seen us."

"You came from the mine?"

"Yes."

"From Casa Blanca?"

"From the mine."

"There are two exits; you see I know that."

He suddenly pulled himself together with a snap. I could feel that his wrath was overpowering him.

"Follow me," he said and led the way to the south hall. I walked after, frightened but determined. He had a stonelike look of slaughter in his eyes.

When we entered the great gallery or chamber the flood of light was at first almost dazzling. I saw Louis was busy with his kitchen and Mr. Duncan sleeping soundly in a distant corner.

"Bring your ball of twine, Louis, we will put it to a better purpose."

"Yes, Don Pablo," said Louis, and I could see that he was frightened.

"Wind it around the boy there; oh, you don't need to take the trouble to tie his hands, a sheep cur has little spunk in him; just wind it round and round over the arms and all. Keep your arms close to your sides, Clint, that's right."

Poor Louis soon had me trussed up as he would a turkey for roasting. He was trembling so with fear

that I pitied him. I did not realize then that he knew Don Pablo much better than I did and had taken fright from the quietness of his face. The idea of a fowl trussed up by the cook seemed to occur to Don Pablo as well.

"You always stuff the crop, don't you, Louis? Here, put this in his mouth," and he untied the handkerchief from his neck. He laughed at the Frenchman's awkwardness and terror. "Stuff it full," he said with a smile. The handkerchief was thrust far back into my mouth and made me strangle and brought the tears to my eyes.

"Any time you make up your mind, Clint, to put the treasure into my hands you can nod your head, and I will let you go free, and I will give you a third interest with the Mexicans. No, better, I will let you share equally with Lawson. Wind the cord around his head and face to keep the gag in," he said to Louis. "Oh, you needn't be too particular about it. It won't have to hold very long." When all was ready Louis stood waiting.

"Pitch him over the cliff," said Don Pablo calmly.

Louis sank to the ground in his terror. "I can't, I can't," he cried. "No, no, I can't do that."

Don Pablo swore a terrible oath and leaping on the unfortunate Canadian, he kicked him brutally with the toe of his boot, but the poor fellow only lay limp and moaning.

"What is it, what is it?" said Mr. Duncan starting up from his sleep and running forward.

"Only this," said Don Pablo, looking at him fiercely.

Whereupon he picked me up by the clothes and the string that bound my legs and my back, and tossed me out over the cliff. I saw the great bowl of water as I shot over.

CHAPTER XXI

A CAÑON

BEFORE I realized that I was actually falling, it seemed to me I had the sensation of alighting. Perhaps because my arms were bound to my sides I felt none of that clutching and grasping into vacancy. I shot like a shuttle through the air, or like a fish that is cleaving the water. Then I seemed to be caught up on springs and was rolled down as into a bird's nest. I understood at once that I was in the top of a palm tree, though I had never before been in such a situation. There was a sense of peace and security in the rising fronds of green and the blue sky so happy overhead, such a contrast with the cavern, and the horror of the witnesses, my friends. I lay quiet for some time, hardly conscious, and if it was not happiness that I felt in those moments it was certainly a physical contentment. In time I loosed the strings that bound my hands—it was very easy to free myself, they were bound so carelessly—and drew the handkerchief out of my mouth and knotted it at my throat since it seemed no more destined for Don Pablo's. It was a beautiful piece of silk of dark blue with a check of lighter blue woven through it. I then sat up in my palm nest and looked about. The prospect was exhilaratingly beautiful, for the pink granite obelisklike towers rose around,

and down across, like a shaft of breaking light, the spray of the waterfall kept drifting.

It was the waterfall that had been my salvation, with its work of a thousand years before, for the moisture gradually deteriorating the rocks had permitted vegetation a footing, so that now, even my palm tree stood ready to catch me in its net as I fell. Looking up I tried to make out the exact spot of the entrance to the cavern, and I decided it must be the smooth surface above that seemed to overhang me almost. Perhaps I had not fallen more than fifteen feet after all on the outspreading leaves of the palm tree. Then I had been rolled back underneath, but, now, how was I going to get down?

It was strange that I was not more anxious about it. I can only explain the calmness of my nerves by the fact that they had been strained to the utmost in the previous interview with Don Pablo and that now in the weakness that succeeded I had not strength enough for anything but content. My wits seemed to be in good order and I soon set about with the string I had been bound with, to braid it into a short but strong piece of rope. When this was done I was delighted to find I had a piece of cord strong enough to bear my weight easily and about five feet in length; for French Louis, in his desire for delay doubtless, had not stinted me in length of the string. The rope finished, I took out my bowie knife and began cutting the palm leaves beneath me on the side of the stem next the cliff, for I must make a little channel for descending, leaving stubs for holding on with my hands.



All this took time and patience, especially when I began to descend, but not until I reached the great cluster of dead leaves underneath did I find the work difficult or fatiguing. When I came to the lowest leaves that were somewhat rotten, I secured myself with the rope around the tree trunk. I had seen pictures of the natives of the South Sea Islands employing this method and found it was easy to do. Only, after I had once bound myself, I had to cut all the dry palm leaves off below the rope, but as they soon proved to be more and more rotten I could tear them away with my hands. Then with free course I hitched my way down the smooth stem, the cliff at my back keeping me from being dizzy, for the trunk was still some twenty feet in length. Once at the foot of the tree I was relieved to see that the chain of vegetation continued, thanks to the dampness of the waterfall, that there were other trees with branches and roots to serve as a ladder, and by degrees I could let myself down.

So long as I did not come to any overhanging cliffs like that immediately beneath the great bowl in the gallery I would be all right. I was slipping down a crevice between two great obelisks and these shut out the awful view of descent. I cannot forbear stopping for a moment in my narrative to give thanks to a certain kind of tree that grows plentifully in that crevice, that, in fact, constructed the ladder for me to creep on. It is a tree which is called by the Mexicans the white pole, *palo blanco*, but it is more like a vine than a pole, clinging close to the face of the precipice with a smooth white trunk as soft as a human hand

and great leathern leaves that make good handholds, so firmly are they fastened to the stem. I had never seen this tree, except in the deep cañons, and often I had admired it for its beauty, while from now on I should love it for its use. How many times I rested in its branches, or wedged myself between the rock and its smooth trunk. I would put my arms around the fresh white stems quite lovingly and press my cheek against the coolness of the bark.

Another plant that I shall always remember was the little resurrection plant of the desert that will roll, a dry ball, across the prairies and, then, once it has found a tiny bit of moisture, will open out into a beautiful green rosette. These clung by the thousand against the smooth sides of the cliff, though they afforded me nothing of a handhold. But undoubtedly they had done their work before, for their tiny roots in the centuries back had loosened up the rock and made it possible for larger plants to get a foothold. I was grateful for the soft cushion to lean back on; when worn out with the nervous strain of the danger, I could brace myself and lean against the rock.

More than a quarter of a mile I had descended into the chasm and still the bottom lay far down beneath. I could feel by the coolness of the air, however, that I was getting lower, and sometimes I saw birds in the trees, tiny woodpeckers chiefly, and creepers, but once a blue bird like the smile of an old friend.

It was late in the afternoon when I finally reached the flat floor of the bottom. There was no stream of water in the cañon, only occasional pools; but there

were willow trees and cottonwoods and sycamores and they made me feel happy and at home. I realized that I was worn out and hungry, for I had long since eaten up my crust of bread. If I must starve down here I would at least have the comfort of water. I lay down and took a deep drink from a pool. I thought that by going down this cañon I might find the mouth of the other entering into it, the one that was bridged by the causeway. I was not despairing of my life yet, by any means, for I still had my revolver at my belt, and if I could succeed in getting beneath the causeway I could signal to my friends far overhead. I knew Lawson would find some method to get down to me if once it was suspected I was alive. Accordingly I was threading down the stream bed, when, without warning, I was suddenly in the midst of the Apache camp. A wounded man was preparing the supper, and the dogs were growling and snuffing about my knees.

CHAPTER XXII

THE APACHE CAMP

ONE of the lessons that we all have to learn is that every living body, both man and beast, has a genial side if only we can see it. The dogs whimpering about me made it impossible that I should appear as an enemy. Moreover there was little use of running nor did I have a strong desire to do so. The fact was I was hungry, very hungry, and a haunch of venison was roasting odorously by the coals. When I saw the man was frightened at the sight of my revolver, I unbuckled the belt with the cartridges and gave it to him in token of peace. It was probably very well that I did so, for his rifle was leaning against a tree only a few yards away, but seeing that I was so peaceably inclined he began to look me over curiously, feeling of my clothes and even my face and hair. I could see that my bowie knife had great fascination for him, and so as I found his nearness to me growing disgusting since he was covered with grease, blood and filth, I made signs that he could have the knife, too, which I handed to him by the tip of the blade.

His delight was unbounded at receiving it and he hobbled about like a crippled child with a new toy. His wound was in the back of his leg and I knew at once he must be the one Lawson had hit when he was

lying behind his aparejo at Casa Blanco. There were no women apparently in the camp, a thing rather unusual for the Apaches, but I counted seven dogs after a time, though it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. They were mangy and miserable looking curs that did not bark at my arrival, but only growled sullenly or else gave a whine. The man kicked them away when they became too familiar and motioned for me to come nearer the camp.

They did not have any wigwam or tent, but some dead pine leaves thrown under a projecting ledge seemed to be a stable that all used in common. I kept looking at the venison, I suppose longingly, for the wounded man went over to the haunch, and, perhaps more to try his new knife than to satisfy my appetite, he cut off a goodly chunk from one corner, and notwithstanding that his hands were not very clean and that the meat had no salt yet upon it, I found it both savory and tasty and ate it with a relish which even the dogs seemed to enjoy. The man was more like a curious child than a bloodthirsty savage, nor did he try to make me prisoner or bind me, though I felt sure if I should attempt to walk away he would at once take some measures to stop me. As it was, I sat down to eat my venison and after a time the man went over to the pile of coals and digging with his fingers in the hot ashes pulled out a corncake from a pile of others and handed it to me with a hospitable gesture. I ate the cake, too, though it had a sour taste not altogether palatable and the dogs all stood around admiring to see me put the bits in my mouth.

The wounded man then tried to question me, pointing upward as if toward the camp. I nodded and then told him my story, showing him how I had been bound with the string, gagged with the handkerchief and tossed from the cliff. Then I pointed to a palm tree, held my hands up to imitate the top and how it caught me; then, using the little ferns on the rock I showed him how I had struggled down to the bottom clinging on to the trunks and roots of the trees. We were only reaching the end of the narrative when four more men came into the camp and immediately all gathered around me, jabbering, gesticulating and grunting together, so that I had good opportunity to survey them after once they had looked me well over.

It was obvious at first glance they were poor; they were emaciated and miserably clad, if one could use such a term for the few garments that but partially covered their bodies. Neither were they very well armed, though each of them had some kind of a rifle. They expressed great delight and satisfaction when the wounded man brought out my revolver to show them, and the oldest man buckled the belt around his naked waist and strutted about like a turkey cock, so that it was both ludicrous and pitiful to see him. You may be sure I felt some compunction in reflecting that I had helped to arm him against my own friends, but I reflected that the Apaches are notoriously poor shots and even in the hands of an expert a revolver is only good at close range. I could see they were repeating the story I had told, going through the motions of binding and being caught in the top of a palm. There

was an old man and perhaps his three sons. The wounded man I thought was of another family. They treated him more like a servant but possibly his being crippled made him the inferior.

After a time the men began to eat voraciously enough from the meat, though I could see they were sparing of the corncakes. They did not sit down to eat, but wandered about among the dogs, kicking promiscuously if any got in their way. The wounded man, not being hungry, tried to talk to me, and I could make out he was describing the battle of the day before, for he showed me how Lawson had worked himself in range behind the aparejo and then made the motion of the bullet hitting him in the leg and leaped up and jumped and yelled much as he had done when he was actually struck.

Then he wanted to show me the wound which was bandaged with a piece of green deer skin. I could see that it most sadly needed dressing and I brought myself to show him that I would wash it and bind it with a piece of my shirt. He seemed to understand and to feel grateful and watched me interestedly as I set about my work. I asked for a dish to warm some water and after many gestures and much talk and objection, one of the younger men went over to the pile of palm trees and drew out an oyster can, quite a fresh one, which I immediately recognized as one from Don Pablo's stock of provisions, cut open on three sides with a can opener in the usual way and with the stale smell of the oysters still in it. I was sure this was one thrown aside by Louis three days before we

reached Casa Blanca, and I reckoned that the Apaches had been following us since that time, and probably from the camp of the inscription on the cliff.

I wondered if they had been responsible for defacing the inscription, or whether Miguel had done it in the morning when he was looking for the lost mule among the hills. I reflected that I should probably never have the chance of questioning him but I was busy now with my office as physician and took little time to sigh about the matter. I cleansed the oyster can thoroughly with boiling water and a bit of soap from my shirt pocket, then making fresh soapsuds of warm water I washed the wound carefully with a piece of my handkerchief and bound it with a sleeve from my undershirt, which I realized was not antiseptic, but which was the best I could do under the circumstances, as my outer shirt was covered with mud, and also much tattered in the body from the rough usage of slipping down the cliffs. The wounded man seemed grateful, very grateful, and stood like a stoic during the performance.

When all was done he strutted about very proudly, displaying the bandage to all of his companions. It was a job that even I could feel proud of for I had my thread and needle in my pocket as I always carried one for repairing the men's clothing, and I not only had sewed the bandage very neatly but had supported it front and back with strips that I fastened to his loin cloth or rather girdle. No doubt the wound felt better being relieved from the stiffened dirt and blood, and all were disposed to view me with some favor. They

had gathered around me in great curiosity when I tore out the sleeve of my undershirt and were much impressed by the whiteness and softness of my skin, and I hope even somewhat by its cleanness. When the night closed in, the younger men tumbled into the palm leaves. They were hospitable enough to offer me a place beside them but I preferred staying with the father and the wounded man who squatted on their haunches by the coals and silently watched or drowsed until the morning.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SIGNAL

THOUGH I was allowed to move freely about the camp I was never for a moment free from being watched and I realized that if I should go even twenty feet away, something terrible would suddenly happen. It was precisely like the case of a mouse that is allowed to go free by the cat; only my reason told me not to try to get away, and I could have marked out my boundary to a foot, the crossing of which would prove sure disaster. An Apache sees even when he sleeps, and it is not for naught that he has the reputation of being the rattlesnake of the desert. I am aware that many have been civilized and that when not on the war path they may be jovial companions. But these men were the outcasts of the reservation and the hunted beasts of the wilderness.

At present they were hovering around my friends and greedy for the slightest thing to gain from them. Moreover they had lost one of their number, a son or a brother perhaps, and the thirst for vengeance must be on them, although to me they were civil enough. The belief that I was an outcast might stand somewhat in my favor but I had little to expect but their torture if once they were elated by a victory.

Now, all was caution and alertness, and I could

wait till they had occasion to enjoy me. The four men stole away an hour before dawn and the wounded one sat opposite me by the smouldering embers, always watching, but his eyes never on me. I began to feel the strain on my nerves and only the daylight brought me the comfort of sleep. When I awoke, it must have been hours after sunrise, and the dogs were playing around me. After I had eaten a piece of venison, now cold, and had a drink of water from the pool, the wounded man motioned me to follow him and we started together down the cañon. I was glad of this for I felt sure it would bring us soon to the junction and I might get a view of our causeway and possibly distinguish the figures of my friends. I suspected that this was the wounded man's purpose and my conjectures were soon to be realized.

My guide stopped after we had gone a little distance and peered around the corner of a boulder. I could see his glance was directed upward, and ahead I could hear the flow of a stream of water. He seemed to be satisfied with the outlook, for retreating again to the protection of an angle he began to cut some low bushes that grew near the edge of a pool and motioned me to do the same, in which, as in all things, I was ready to obey him. After we had collected each a respectable heap, he drew out some strings from his loin cloth and began tying them around my arms, legs and body but leaving me quite free of limb. In these strings he stuck the stems of the bushes till I felt I was waving like a meadow and would be one when I lay down on my face. Once he had me decked out to his satisfac-

tion, he began arranging himself. He did it so quickly and deftly I imagine a lady could hardly arrange her hair with such precision, and this done we slipped back to our boulder and throwing ourselves down on the sand we began to hitch ourselves laboriously outward but at a rate so slow as hardly to be distinguished, like the moving of the hands on a clock, that do move, though one can never catch them at it.

It seemed a half hour before we had rounded the corner where we could glance along the intersecting cañon and turning on one side we could look upward where the causeway hung almost immediately above us, a bridge across our narrow path of skyland, but seemingly a half mile away. The bushes were so bound to our heads that we could lift them without being discovered and if anyone had looked down with a spyglass he could see no more than two little patches of herbage such as were growing all around in the sand. While the causeway seemed over us, it was not directly in the zenith; and, if a man should walk within two feet of the edge of it, we might at least see his head in passing, provided our eyesight would carry that distance, though it must be done at a fearful straining of the neck. This I could only endure for a moment, though my companion did not seem to mind the effort and would gaze upward for hours it seemed to me. I soon gave up the attempt to look at all and with my back half turned to my wry-necked contortionist of a bed-fellow, I lay quietly waiting till he should summon me to crawl back, which he seemed to have no intention of doing. Our position was soon



rendered almost insufferable by the nooning sun suddenly striking down upon us. It would have only about an hour's time to shine, but it seemed desirous to make up for the brief period by burning us as through some giant lens. I thought now my companion would retreat but his head was still bent backward beneath its growth of bushes and once I imagined I felt a slight tremble in his body as if he had possibly seen a figure passing, but my neck was too tired to make another effort and I again laid my cheek upon the sand.

Then it was, I thought of my little mirror, and felt to see if it was in my trousers pocket. This was one Lawson had given me for signaling and in times past we had experimented often with it. It was his theory that sometime one of us might get lost and the plan was to get up a mountain and flash the sunlight on the country round below. We had amused ourselves with this a few times in our expeditions and had even agreed upon a little code of signals, one flash meaning yes and three no, and a flickering, changing flash meant danger and beware. More to amuse myself than in the hope of obtaining any response, I slipped the little trinket from my pocket and holding it in my hand and well concealed from the Apache, let it catch the sun now near the meridian, trying to direct the flash to the causeway, and giving the flickering motion of "danger and beware."

I had probably kept this up for twenty minutes when I was conscious of a jerk in my companion's head as if something had hit him in the eye. I kept

up the flickering motion, varying the angle slightly, with regularity, to make sure to intercept the causeway and counting the seconds till I should get the second yes, for we had agreed upon a minute as the interval before the second flash should be given. Precisely on time, the Apache's head jerked again and I was so sure then that Lawson was answering with his signal, that I left off the flickering of the danger and gave him a long stroke for a yes. Then I started the danger again very violently, only pausing at the sixty counts to give a long stroke, then taking up the danger once again, for I was afraid that my companion might grow suspicious if the light caught his eyes a third time. I even feared he might suspect the reason why my hand was trembling slightly though it lay on the side away from him. As long as the sun held I continued to give the stroke of yes on sixty counts, and at times I would flutter up the danger as often and as varied as I dared.

When the sun disappeared behind the cliff I was surprised to find I was not grateful for the coolness. I felt now my sadness, my isolation. I did not reflect that my old partner might already have left his station on the causeway, and with the promptness that was habitual to him always, be well started on his hazardous work of rescue.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MOVING ROCK

THE four men came back before dark somewhat earlier than they had the previous night. They seemed to have decided about something and the wounded man was not pleased about it. I had a feeling that the dispute that followed might have something to do with me though they looked at me rather less than usual. However, all were conscious every moment where I was. My uneasiness was rather increased by the fact that two of them began whetting their knives. They did not do it with the easy delay of one who is merely putting his tools in order. There was an obvious purpose about it, of having something immediately to cut. As I saw no game anywhere to skin, I naturally was led to think of myself. I was soon to have further evidence in this uncomfortable matter by the youngest fellow slipping up to me when I was not looking and giving me a light gash across the cheek. I started with an exclamation of pain whereupon the young fellow laughed brazenly at me, and I saw by a glance around the circle that they were all experiencing a keen sense of enjoyment though their features hardly could be said to have changed expression. It was rather more like an intense look of anticipated pleasure than

anything else. The wounded man grumbled about something and pointed to the bandage on his leg.

My feelings were relieved for a moment by all of them turning their attention to the dogs. Before I knew what they were about they had killed one with a blow from the butt of a rifle and they were hanging it up on a low tree to skin it, and for this the knives came into play. The other dogs were wild with excitement and I could see were anticipating the skinning and disemboweling of the animal that but a moment before had been their playmate, and was even now twitching as with life. I stood off as far to one side as I thought would be permitted and gazed upon the spectacle somewhat dolefully, sometimes wiping the blood from my face. With my finger I could feel that the cut was not deep, but it extended from my temple down across my jaw and very evenly, from one end to the other, had separated the entire tissues of the skin. I was marked like a German student in a duel. In fact, later on in life, I have received much respect from the scar for that reason. I will have to wear the brand throughout my life.

It was while I was standing thus isolated that the first sense of Lawson's presence came to me. The signal was a little tap upon my head as from a pebble no larger than a bean. I stood for a time quite still waiting for another, and in time another fell, this time behind me. Lawson must then be in the rocks above me, which I had thought here were a perpendicular wall. I did not dare look up lest the glance should seem suspicious, but slowly when I thought the

watchers did not see me, I nodded my head down and up.

It did not take the Apaches long to have the meat ready for the barbecue, and while the dogs were fighting for the offal, the wounded man put the carcass on the coals. They had a peculiar way—I could never understand it—of having a bed of embers without blaze or smoke. But it may be they had built the fire at noontime and now it was kept over as I saw it. I had expected that the men would sit down to wait while the meat was roasting, but they kept moving about restlessly, almost nervously. Only the wounded man lay down as if quite unconcerned and after a time I too lay down beside him. I now had my opportunity to look upward for the twilight was still lingering in the cañon, and I scanned every spot and shadow of the two walls trying to descry some niche or cranny that would be big enough for a man to cling to, and which would not be entirely inaccessible for my friend. All the time I was expecting to hear his rifle and see the men falling around me, though I reflected that if they thought of a betrayal they would quickly put me out of the way of further harm.

After much searching and some study of the matter, I decided that the only place at all possible was on a bare bench of rock directly above the cave in which the young men slept, though such a shallow protection could hardly be termed a cave, not being more than four feet deep at the greatest where the palm leaves were piled in disorder. The height of this bench was perhaps fifteen feet from the ground. I could see

that it sloped up gradually from higher up the cañon. It might be possible to get on it around the corner, but around that corner I had never been. But how could Lawson be on that bare shelf of rock? I studied every inch of its surface. It was covered with the little resurrection plants of which I have already spoken. No other shrub or bush was on it and it seemed to me hardly possible that the width of the shelf itself could conceal the body of a man, as it seemed to slope outward rather than backward, and in one place, there was not even standing room, as a lump of rock lay along the shelf for several feet.

My eye could still distinguish the little resurrection plants growing in the crevices wherever their clinging roots could get a foothold. I don't know why I continued to gaze at this piece of rock so long. But I was startled after taking my eyes from it for a moment to find it had slightly shifted its position. I looked again more closely, if that were possible, trying to imagine Lawson might be beneath it. I also looked at my companion by my side to see if he had remarked this change in the landscape. The wounded man was not looking that way at all, nor at me; but when he felt my head turn a little he put out one hand and rested it gently on my leg. I suspected that was so that he might have any intimation if I should attempt escape, for his glance was on his comrades who were now stepping about more restlessly than ever, with a curious springing motion of the legs that suggested the nervous twitching of a body in pain, or of the lately slaughtered dog before it stiffened.

The sight of them gave me an unexplainable feeling of terror and once more my eyes sought the rock. This time I was certain I saw it move. It heaved up for an inch or more, it seemed to me, and I saw the little resurrection plants heave with it. There was a line of them growing in a crevice. The wall behind did not move, nor the shelf in front, but the long rock was slowly rolling over. I watched it very intently. It must be that Lawson was within it. Still I could hardly see how that might be, either, for the entire stone was not so big as his body. I waited to see what would happen, when a little point began appearing in the middle. It must be a boa constrictor, I thought, and this point be the tip of his tail. But how then could the resurrection plants grow on a snake; and I could see, too, the smooth surface of the rock. It was just when the wounded man was rising that I could see the point was the end of a rope. It let down some five or six inches and then was suddenly drawn up. I knew now that the rock must be Lawson, and I felt I would surely be saved. How he had transformed himself into a rock I did not stop at that time to question. But I knew that he was there waiting for me, and that if I could get over to the palm leaves beneath, the rope would come down till I could grasp it and I would be drawn up the side of the cliff.

The wounded man ordered me to get up. The other men were increasing the spasmodic twitching of their steps till it resembled a weird kind of dancing. Their eyes were changed, too, I could see; they were getting abnormal and glassy. The wounded man alone was un-

changed, and he continued to stand by me as if to protect me. The fumes of the burning meat were now rising in the air and the darkness of the night was falling in. I realized that some horrible ceremony was about to take place and began to suspect I was meant to play an important part in it. After some time I made so bold as to look up, but in my haste I could not distinguish anything and I dared not be seen to be staring. The movement of the dance began to increase, the dogs retired to a distance and the wounded man brought up some dried brush and kindled a blaze from the embers. He did not remove the carcass of the dog to do it but started a new fire farther out from the wall of the cliff. As the blaze began to light up the place wildly and the men were beginning to circle around it, there was suddenly a great flash of gunpowder, and then immediately smoke settled, and darkness. I knew this was the moment for me, and sure enough, as I ran in front of the cave I felt the rope descend to my head and I even could see it faintly swinging. It had a loop in the end which I ran my arm through to insure greater safety. But it was not necessary. I could hold it with my hands and no sooner did I put my weight on it than I felt myself drawn up against the sides of the rock.

CHAPTER XXV

A WHITE APACHE

THEY were Lawson's hands that received me on the ledge. Even now I felt their peculiar dryness. He thrust me back against the cliff.

"Lie down," was the only thing he whispered.

I lay down immediately behind his feet. In brushing by him I touched against his back and legs and I felt that he was quite devoid of garments, only his skin was smeared over with dried mud and there were strings of things tied around him in different places. I knew then that these were the resurrection plants I had seen, and that Lawson had even outdone the Apaches. He was standing now with his rifle in his hand, and who shall say that my clay statue was not noble? But he did not shout, he did not move, the bare ankles were as firm as posts of iron.

I listened to the disturbance below, the Apaches were snorting and grunting like a lot of wild swine that have been frightened. The blaze of the fire had been entirely extinguished nor did they attempt to kindle it again, though they must have recognized the acrid smell of the gunpowder and realized that this was nothing supernatural. It was evident that they were searching for me, however, and pretty soon the dogs began to clamor just below us. Lawson said

afterward that he thought they had scented my track to the rock and were telling their masters about it, but of that he was never quite sure. At any rate the crowd of men and dogs collected directly beneath us. We could hear them all grunting and gabbling, perhaps they thought I had hid beneath the palm leaves, for I could hear these were being tumbled over. The dry crackling of the leaves and the rumble of their voices seemed to say that they were all in the hollow cave.

Then it was Lawson leaned over and gave me his rifle and began fumbling with a small parcel he had.

"Lie low," he whispered, "it is dynamite. I will blow them to the place that they came from."

I saw by the sputter of a match soon after he spoke that he had two sticks of powder tied to the end of his rope and he was igniting the end of the fuse. Then I could see he was lowering it carefully, and I could feel he was watching down below.

"Lie flat," he called this time half aloud.

As he did this he threw himself upon me and he had hardly more than touched me with his body when a fearful detonation shook the cañon and the rush of a great blast swept over us, fastening us closer to the rock, if that were possible, and driving our very flesh into greater denseness. Then all was quiet and the space seemed to open up again. For a moment the sense of vacancy was almost painful, till the atmosphere regained its equilibrium, and only a distant echo of reverberation far above us reminded us of the destruction that had taken place. Lawson was sitting

up putting his fingers to his ears as if to bring them out of their numbness.

"I had to put on both sticks," he said, and his voice sounded far away. "I had two sticks, the other one would have gone off anyway if I had thrown it down and of course it wasn't safe to keep it up here."

"Are they all dead?" I whispered fearfully.

"They are better off if they are," he replied. "But for my part I'm not going down to see. Oh, yes, of course they are dead. You wouldn't find a sign if you went down there."

I had my hand clasped around his bare knee. "Where are your clothes, Lawson?" I asked.

"At Casa Blanca. Oh, I started out to do this Apache style. Clothes are no good if one is hiding, bare skin looks much more like the rocks, especially if rubbed over with mud."

We seemed in no hurry to go and yet Lawson said it was better. He led me along the path very carefully to a crevice where we wedged ourselves in behind a boulder and soon emerged into the cañon, the bed of which we began to descend.

"It's curious they would settle in such a trap," said Lawson. "I suppose they never thought of a white man's playing their own tricks. Well, I would not have thought I could do it. But I knew from the start it was the only way."

"But who taught you all the things that they know?"

"Well, necessity, I suppose," he said after thinking. "Though I have watched them from time to time for

the last ten years. I argued that it was queer if a white man should put his mind to it that he couldn't think of as many things as a savage, especially when they give him a pointer. They led me down to this place of course, for I never should have found it without them. I rigged myself up with grass and sage brush in Casa Blanca, though there I had old Miguel to help me. It was he who brought me the dynamite when he saw me taking a little bag of gunpowder. Both of them came in very handy. He showed me, too, how Apaches tie a loin cloth. You see I have a real one made of buckskin. We thought, even if the Apaches should see me, they might take me for one of themselves. I wound the rope around my body to stick the brush in but it turned out it was lucky I had it. Well, Clint, I crawled down from Casa Blanca right in the teeth of those devils. I wormed along like a Gila monster in the sand and I sighted them in that dry cañon before they had got a glimpse of me, though they looked over me I suppose for three hours. I thought there would be at least one in the cañon watching but I was surprised a little to find four. After they started home it was easy enough, plain sailing till I got to their camp. Then I had such a time getting sight of you. I was relieved when I saw you running free."

I explained to him how they had treated me. I felt sorry that the wounded man was dead.

"Oh, he would have joined in the dance, too, after it was started. Though I could see he was opposed to it from the start."

"They were going to have a dance then?"

"Call it what you like, it isn't much of a dance. Your Apache is nothing to your Sioux for dancing, but anyway they were planning to torture you. Then they would have feasted on the dog. It's lucky you flashed me that signal. Not but that I was coming down anyway for your body, but I wouldn't have been in such a hurry about it. You must have lighted in a tree or some bushes when you were thrown out. Let's sit down here and you can tell me about it. Anyway we can't take the trail back up the rocks till dawn. We'll have to spend the night here in the cañon."

We sat down together and I told him all that had happened after the palm tree, though at the time I said no word about what happened in the mine. I said merely that I fell into the palm tree and not a word of how I was thrown over the cliff. Nor did Lawson mention Don Pablo, though I was hoping all the time he would do so.

"Is Mr. Duncan in the mine still," I asked, tentatively, "and how is everybody at the camp?"

"Mr. Duncan came to the upper camp yesterday morning when Carlos and I were having breakfast," he said. "I could see that something terrible had happened, for his face was the color of ashes and he stumbled about as he walked, though I could see he had not been drinking.

"What's the matter, Mr. Duncan?" I asked, for he sat down and never said a word.

"McClintock is dead," he answered dryly.

" 'Where's Don Pablo?' I asked, for I thought that the man had gone crazy.

" 'He's in the mine.'

" 'Did you see Miguel?' I asked; for Miguel had already gone down.

" 'I met him in Casa Blanca,' he replied.

" 'Now I thought that was a queer place to meet but I asked him, 'Where is he now?'

" 'I don't know,' he said in a dazed way and then I didn't ask any more but I told Carlos to watch out for the animals and I set out for the mine on a run. Sure enough when I got to Casa Blanca there was Miguel standing like a post in the doorway.

" 'Mr. Duncan says Clint is dead,' I said.

" 'It's what he said to me.'

" 'Did he say where?'

" 'Miguel only shrugged his shoulders. Before I could ask he walked by me.

" 'How could Clint be dead?'

" 'If he's dead Don Pablo killed him.'

" 'We didn't say anything more but went over to the shaft. I called down, and we heard someone moaning.

" 'Clint,' I called.

" 'Clint is dead.' It was the voice of Louis that answered, and then he began to whine and pray. We let down the rope and drew him up, all of which, of course, we did in a minute. He was as limp as a rag when we got hold of him, and nearer dead than alive. It took an hour to get the story out of him and I guess it was his luck we didn't kill him for being such a coward as he was. We kicked him all the way up to

the camp, or I did, and Miguel walked behind me. Louis begged him and me both to shoot him but I told him shooting was too easy, and Miguel never spoke a word all the way.

"That day we stayed in the upper camp, we were beat out. I wrote a letter to Don Pablo, which Miguel said he'd drop down the shaft. Mr. Duncan roused up after a while and we all crawled around the brink of the cañon trying to get opposite to the cavern in the mine. We thought we could look down with a spy-glass and maybe see your body at the bottom. But we couldn't seem to locate it somehow though I s'pose Mr. Duncan's trying yet.

"I got tired of such slow work the next morning and planned to try the dry cañon the Apaches ran down, for I argued that they must have water somewhere and maybe knew a path down to the bottom. I was all ready to start and Miguel and I were going over the bridge to see if Don Pablo had got my letter, and in fact Miguel was calling down the shaft, but I was standing out on the bridge because it seemed to me more proper to do things through a second. I was standing there waiting for an answer when I got your danger signal in my eyes. Of course I told Miguel, and we left Don Pablo to wait. So now you know the whole story, Clint, but I wish I had my shirt and my overalls, for the air in this cañon is cold. Suppose we build a fire after all. I don't think the Apaches will trouble us."

We soon had a fire with some dry sticks and were merry together.

"Mr. Duncan will learn from Miguel that I am not dead?"

"Yes, at least that you were alive to-day noon."

"It's a wonder that I am now, or you either, but what was the letter to Don Pablo?"

"Why just to ask him to meet me and name the weapons. That was very simple," replied Lawson.

"But he hadn't answered it. Maybe he hadn't received it?"

"He will receive it and answer it," said Lawson, "but there is time enough for that again to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ANCIENT PRIESTHOOD

WE drowsed a little, late on in the night, and it was full light of dawn when I opened my eyes. Lawson was shivering by the fire and not until now did I realize the terrible ordeal he had gone through. I had insisted the night before on sharing my garments with him, and he had forced his legs into my drawers, which fortunately were very loose for me; but my tattered shirt could only be got on him by ripping it open down the front. But what a sight, his body underneath the rags! It looked as if there was scarcely any skin left untouched, he was a mass of blood and clay from head to foot. Even his face was scratched and disfigured and his hair, which had been oiled in the beginning to make it hang more like an Apache's, was matted and clotted with blood.

"Only scratches from the thorns and stones," he said carelessly when I began to express my horror and sympathy, but I could see that his eyes were bright with fever and his teeth chattered in spite of his efforts at self-control.

"You're no beauty yourself, Clint," he said. "Where did you get that gash down your face?"

When I told him his eyes burned so fiercely I thought he would go into a frenzy.

"Let's get back to camp," I said soothingly and I got him to hobble along. We were both of us stiff with the cold but Lawson's feet were in tolerable condition.

"Miguel gave me his moccasins for my shoes; otherwise I should have had to go it barefoot."

Sometimes he forgot where the trail went up the rocks, but his long experience in mountaineering did not fail him. I was relieved, however, to see Miguel coming down to meet us, for now we were safe with our friends.

"I told you not to look for me," said Lawson querulously.

"Mr. Duncan has taken charge of the camp and he sent me to meet you," replied Miguel.

The old man looked at me long and wistfully as he came up, but did not offer a word of welcome or greeting. I was familiar with his way and knew he meant well.

"Good morning, Miguel," I said to him.

"Good morning, son."

"You lead the way back, Miguel, and Lawson and I will follow. I want to get him quickly to the camp for his scratches will give him a fever."

So it was we made light of the matter, though the old Mexican knew very well that he was getting us back from the dead.

He turned but one question to Lawson. "Will the Apaches come up this morning?"

"Not to-day," said Lawson, and then after a silence: "Your dynamite has settled their account."

There were no more words spoken till we came to the ledge below Casa Blanca where the dead Apache now lay in his shallow grave.

"You can go on up to camp," said Miguel. "I will stop and get your clothes and a canteen of water." We waited for a drink from the canteen, for both of us were burning up with thirst. Miguel then again led the way, carrying Lawson's clothes tied up in a bundle.

Carlos came riding down to meet us, shouting and waving his hat. The poor fellow was quite overcome with his joy and the tears rolled down his cheeks quite unchecked. Mr. Duncan was waiting on the hill and hailed us with his merriest shout and laughter.

"You are more than prehistoric now, my lads. You are primitive men. You antedate the cave dwellers. Henceforth, I shall hold you to my heart."

He began bustling about the camp to make us comfortable and everyone submitted to his orders. The disgraced Louis was sent this way and that, hot water, soap, towels and arnica were in requisition and Lawson was ordered to bed after being swathed in linen like a mummy. As the tents were hot, the blankets were spread under a live oak, and old Miguel was set to putting up an awning in its branches to supplement its very scanty shade. Carlos simply stood about and laughed and Mr. Duncan seemed to find even that useful for he made the boy the butt of all his pretended gruffness and swearing, which served to make Carlos laugh the more. We were certainly very happy there together, and I kept wondering if it would be so if

Don Pablo were present, and I have often wondered since if every great egotist has to take for punishment the knowledge that his friends are happier without him, no matter how great or powerful he may be.

After Lawson had been comfortably established, for I insisted that he should be cared for first, the merry physician turned his attention to me and began preparing my garments and bandages.

"Bring a pan of fresh warm water, Miguel; soap, Carlos, and have these cloths ready. I think we can dispense with this shirt, it will hurt to draw it over his head."

As he said this he took out his scissors and slit up the front of my undershirt until he got to the placket, when he deliberately undid the buttons, folding the shirt back like a coat. I realized while he was doing this that it would expose the malachite charm. I felt, too, that he realized the same thing, and that Miguel and all the men were looking on. Still it was difficult to interfere with Mr. Duncan and no word was spoken as I stood before them with the green charm so prominent on my breast.

"Just draw the shirt back, Carlos," said Mr. Duncan. "Gently, you stupid, he is not a bullock. Well, well, that is a pretty ugly cut, but first we must wash away that soil." I could see the bowl of water quivering in Miguel's hand.

"Give the bowl to Carlos," said Mr. Duncan, looking at Miguel casually for a moment. "And then I think until his wound is dressed you will have to take that cord from his neck; put it over my head for safe

keeping. We will put it back when all is well in order."

It was then that he looked at Miguel briefly but steadily in the eyes. I could feel that there was a pledge given in that look, and I turned to Miguel to see if it would be answered. The old Indian did not hesitate a moment, but reaching over he gently took the cord over my head, and put it around the neck of Mr. Duncan, slipping the charm inside against his breast. Mr. Duncan gave a low nervous laugh, the one with which we were all now familiar.

"I, too, am now a member of the ancient priesthood," he said, "and I swear to guard the treasures of Winopa."

He then proceeded with my wound and its bandages and even Lawson did not offer question or remark.

CHAPTER XXVII

CONSULTATION

I WAS eager for a talk with Miguel and took the first opportunity of speaking alone with him.

"Mr. Duncan will give the charm back, Miguel; I have only to ask him to do it."

"It is very well where it is," he said simply.

"Mr. Duncan came into the treasure house while I was sleeping, Miguel. He found his way through the labyrinth."

"Oh, so it was he who took the dynamite from the boxes."

"Yes, but he promised me not to tell Don Pablo for that day. Now he will never tell him."

"It would make little difference if he did."

"But you will not harm Mr. Duncan now, for he has sworn?"

"I would not have harmed him before, son. I saw the pledge in his eyes in the treasure house as he told me you were murdered."

"Did you meet him in the treasure house?"

"He was coming out as I was going down."

"And you did not harm him, Miguel?"

"I saw his eyes and he told me you were dead. He did not even look at the treasure."

"I think I might tell Lawson, Miguel. He has

saved me from the torture of the Apaches. I cannot bear that my heart should deceive him."

The old man looked grave at the thought of it.

"He will swear too, Miguel, he will give me his life if I ask it. He has given it me already, Miguel. He will help us guard the treasure of Winopa."

"We do not need his help."

"Miguel, we must not let him fight with Don Pablo. If he goes into the mine he will never come out alive."

"What has that to do with the treasure?"

"If he is killed by Don Pablo, will he not give his life for the treasure?"

"No, he will give it to avenge you."

"But do I not represent the treasure, Miguel?"

"Well, son?"

"Should he not know for what it is he dies?"

"Son, I see you have this in your heart. If you had asked me before I should have struck you dead. But now, you return from the dead."

"It was Lawson who brought me back, Miguel."

"He must swear," said the old man fiercely.

"You, yourself, shall put the charm on his breast. Will you do it, Miguel, if he swears?"

"I have thought, my son, the ancient god directs you. I think he is ruling you still."

I made so bold as to lay my hand on his, and he did not draw away from my touch.

"Have you been in the mine since you met Mr. Duncan in the treasure house?" I asked him after some silence.

"No."

"Don Pablo may have found his way through the labyrinth."

"It will do him little good if he does. I put a heavy stone in the manhole. I wedged it in, he cannot drag it back. On this side I secured it with a bar. There is no need of watching there now."

"Miguel, if Lawson swears, if you give him the oath, do you want to tell Carlos? He is your grandson. We should have another Mexican in our brotherhood."

Miguel nodded. "Carlos will keep faith," he said slowly. "I will tell him to-night."

"Then we will all be brothers together. We must try to get Don Pablo to go home. We can do it if we work together, Miguel."

"It would be an evil thing to let him starve there like a rat."

"But Lawson would fight him, Miguel."

"That is not for me to meddle with," said the Indian.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A GROWING BROTHERHOOD

"THERE are no two ways about it," said Lawson in his decided way of closing an argument. "That gold doesn't belong to us any more than the output of any modern mine."

"Whom does it belong to?" asked Mr. Duncan.

"What is that to you and me so long as it doesn't belong to us? Leave that for the lawyers to settle."

"What the lawyers didn't take for themselves they would probably turn over to the state, which is only another set of lawyers, so there wouldn't be much advantage in that."

To this no one had any remark.

"As a matter of fact," Mr. Duncan continued, "I can't bring myself to think the Mexican government has any right to the treasure of the Aztecs. The Mexican government, if it represents anything, surely represents the people of Spanish descent who already owe a great debt to the aborigines. We all deplore the robberies of Cortez and how can we then continue them in a later generation? That treasure belongs to the Indians who hold the legend, but they are all sworn not to touch it as it belongs to their king who is dead."

"Well I honor them for protecting it just the same,

and I honor old Miguel, if he *is* a Mexican; and he can count on me to stand by him; and I'll even swear with the charm if Clint wants me to. Of course it is all a piece of tomfoolery, but why shouldn't the old man be humored in his superstitions? He hasn't had the advantages of an enlightened civilization, and has to see things the way he was educated."

"It's a lot of gold," said Mr. Duncan wistfully.

Lawson gave a snort of indignation. "Oh, yes, there is a lot of gold in the United States Mint, but you and I are not hankering for it. The only gold that has any significance for us is the gold in the ore to be mined. These nuggets you tell about don't interest me anyway. Why, any peon can pick up a nugget. The only gold that is worthy to be mined is gold in the ore; that takes some science. A prospector comes along with an eye for a formation and a ledge, he sizes it up, gets some specimens and puts in his mortar, he grinds them up, puts the blowpipe on them and tests them with acids, then he takes some samples to the assayer to get his results verified, and then he disposes of his claim to a capitalist in the ordinary and honorable way. I wouldn't give a nickel for your treasure houses. I don't care if they are filled up with nuggets."

Mr. Duncan laughed and rubbed his knees. "Every man for his specialty," he said. "Now do you know that once I had a drawing of that labyrinth I didn't care a rap about the treasure either. Though I do want to make some notes on Casa Blanca and especially on the trapdoor, which is a wonder. The deuce

of it is, I am in honor bound not to publish these things and the science of archæology must still remain in darkness. They can't even appear after I am dead. And then," he added bitterly after a moment's silence, "it will be just my luck to have some whipper-snapper of a young student come along with a surveying expedition and get the whole thing as easy as if it were a tenement house in Philadelphia, and the academy will award him a medal.

"Well, call up Miguel for the ceremony," he continued. "We will get out of this thing all there is in it. McClintock is right to stick to the romance; and, Lawson, don't let's see a smile on your face, for the old man will take things in earnest."

Lawson promised, and I called up Miguel. I was glad to see he was bringing Carlos with him. The animals were hobbled for the night and French Louis was busy in his kitchen.

There was something very beautiful about Carlos, a light like the stars in his eyes as he came forward and took both my hands and then embraced me in the Mexican fashion. Then he went over to Mr. Duncan and took his hand, a thing that before he would never have dreamed of doing, nor did Mr. Duncan resent it, though he was always very liberal about customs.

Lawson began talking to Miguel. "Don Clinto has just been telling me of the mine and the treasure house under Casa Blanca and I think you are quite right, Miguel, in protecting the secret of the ancients. If you had told me about this in the first place, we would

never have got into all this trouble, for I would have cut signs on the rocks that would have led them in the other direction. I had no idea they were off on such a robbery as this. I thought we were all honorable prospectors. Now you can depend on me to protect this secret with my life and my word, it is as good as any swearing. Clint says though you would like it better if I swear and you put that piece of mineral on my neck. So go ahead with your lingo as much as you like and I will try to say it over after you. Clint wants it, and I'd do more than that to please him though I do say my word is as good as theirs is, and no man will say to the contrary."

"There now, you have talked enough," said Mr. Duncan, "and Miguel shall put the talisman on your breast. Here it is, Miguel," he said taking the cord over his head, "and though I yield the symbol to the owner I stand by my oath and pledge of loyalty."

The old man took the charm in his hands and a look half pitiful, half murderous, swept across his face. He seemed to feel that they were making light of things holy, though I am sure he did not doubt the sincerity of either of the white men he regarded as his superiors.

"It is not necessary for Lawson to swear by the charm," he said, "though I did ask it not long since of Don Clinto. That rite is reserved only for our people and I am willing to take Lawson's word with his hand."

He extended his own hand in a timid way, he seemed to be quite humbled and conquered.

I was surprised to find it was Lawson who was humbled.

"But I want to take the oath, Miguel. I really want it," and he did not let go the old man's hand. In fact he took the other hand as well, the one in which the talisman was lying and when his fingers touched it he seemed to start, then he lifted up his hands, both of them, and bowed his head, and the old Indian said "swear" as he dropped the cord over, and Lawson repeated "I swear," in the Indian tongue. I had never supposed he knew a word of it.

The charm hung on the outside of his jacket and it was Carlos who went over to him and slipped it inside of his shirt collar, making sure that it lay against his skin. Then he took his hand and embraced him, and Miguel did the same and they went away, leaving us together at the tent.

"It's a piece of tomfoolery I know," said Lawson sheepishly, "but a fellow feels better all the same."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SEARCH FOR DON PABLO

THE next morning found us all in good spirits and ready to turn our attention to Don Pablo. As Mr. Duncan would have nothing to say on one side or the other, it was agreed that he should stay in the camp with Carlos and Louis, while Lawson, Miguel and I should go to the mine.

"Proceed as you like in your treatment of your prisoner," said Mr. Duncan. "You will get no criticism from me. Since I saw him throw McClintock over that cliff to what he considered certain death I have taken no interest in his welfare or punishment. He is as a man who does not exist. Indeed, I am of the opinion that a man who commits so atrocious a crime as that by the very act puts himself outside the pale of human consideration, and the only concern society need have about him is to see that it is made impossible that such an act should be repeated. I am willing to stay here in camp for a few days while you undertake such measures as you see fit but I should much prefer that you tell me nothing about the outcome of the matter, and you may be sure I will ask you no questions."

So it was we three set out together feeling deeply the responsibility upon us. Lawson was firmly of the

opinion that Don Pablo should die and he did not doubt for a moment but that he should kill him. Miguel seemed to support him in this opinion and I was most seriously distressed. In vain I pleaded that Don Pablo was not legally guilty since I had escaped without harm, but Lawson said that did not make any difference morally, and on moral arguments Lawson was always strong. I was silenced but still hoped for some way out. I realized that I should have been dead had it not been for Lawson's heroic work of rescue, and I could not make light of that matter, nor did I think it becoming to do so. I felt that I was Lawson's by right, and he could avenge me or not as he saw fit. I knew there was one useless argument but I tried it in despair of trying anything else.

"You know, Lawson, if you fight, you may be killed too."

"That is very probable," he said simply.

"Or it is even possible that you may miss and he may succeed."

He stopped to consider a moment. "No, I have failed in many things in my life but I shall not fail in my death."

"You succeeded yesterday in saving me."

"Yes, and I shall succeed again in this."

"But who will look out for me if you die?"

"You will get on by yourself. Even if I live you will have to go away to get your education."

"Why do you always insist I must be educated?"

"Oh, yes, you must. You will not grow up in ignorance as I have."

"I think friendship is dearer than learning."

I could see he was touched by this but he did not swerve from his opinion.

"You are only a boy, Clint," he said.

By this time we had arrived at Casa Blanca and I looked at Miguel to see if we should proceed across the causeway. But he seemed to trust Lawson entirely.

"This way is safer," was all he said, and he pushed back the door to the treasure house and motioned for Lawson to follow as he disappeared down the trap.

Lawson showed little interest in the chamber and barely noticed the piles of nuggets on the floor. He helped Miguel take the stone from the manhole and then said:

"You had better stay with Don Clinto. I will go in and meet him alone."

But in this Miguel, too, was determined.

"No, I promised to deliver your letter," he said doggedly, "and I am going to bring you an answer. Besides you are not familiar with the labyrinth, though Don Clinto will tell you the clew. Moreover," he said wistfully this time, "you must remember that Don Pablo is master and that it is my duty now to go to him."

"Very well," replied Lawson yielding to him. "I will wait here for an hour if you like. But if you are not back in an hour's time I will follow and if you hear me you must call out at once for I shall have my rifle and be ready to shoot."

"Very well," said the old Indian patiently and he thereupon crawled into the manhole.

We sat down each of us on a pile of nuggets, the candle between us on the floor. It seemed curious that we had nothing to say. It seemed as if all things were settled between us. From time to time Lawson looked at his watch but I never once asked him for the hour. All the while I was trying to think, but my brain seemed to refuse to do its office. I began to feel at length the time was nearly up. Lawson was making ready with his rifle. Then we heard Miguel coming back; he called from the other end of the hole.

He held a letter which he gave at once to Lawson.

"It is your letter. It was lying at the foot of the shaft. Don Pablo is not anywhere to be found. The food and provisions in the south gallery seem untouched as Louis left them. Don Pablo's rifle is standing in the corner."

"Did you search the labyrinth?" I asked.

"Yes, and the main galleries of the mine, and I called everywhere."

"He has probably leaped off the cliff," said Lawson after considering. "It was about the only thing he could do."

But Miguel shook his head as if in doubt. "That would not be like Don Pablo," he said thoughtfully. "Wait here and I will go and search again," he said. "I came back because the hour was up."

"I will go with you this time," said Lawson. "But is it safe to leave Don Clinto here?"

I begged so hard to go with them that Lawson finally consented.

"But you must keep close behind me," he admonished. "I will not trust you from me again."

Our search had no better result than that of the old Indian. The south gallery was precisely as I left it so far as I could remember. There was the work of the kitchen unfinished when Louis had been called away by Don Pablo! Mr. Duncan's bed was in the corner precisely as he had come tumbling out of it. I thought I could even remember Don Pablo's rifle standing against the rock wall in the corner but in that I may have been mistaken. I did not forget to creep out and peer around the corner where Don Pablo had sought his view of the sky; it was a narrow and dizzying ledge and Lawson was uneasy till I returned. I had tried to get a view of the palm tree beneath the great bowl of water but the projecting rock hid it from view, there was no hint of the green trees of that crevice. Had Don Pablo, in peering over after me, trying to get a sight of the place I had fallen into, possibly slipped in his footing and gone down, too? And in that case would I not have heard him? Lawson said if he struck against the rock, I would; but if it was a sheer fall at that place I probably wouldn't; so we tumbled a rock down to try it, but got back no sound from below. Then we tossed a rock out over the bowl where I had gone and, sure enough, faintly the sound came back to us, striking and falling, still falling.

We explored many of the other galleries of the

mine that led off to the east of the south gallery. We found that sometimes they were intersected by great chasms, some of which opened also to a faint light from the top and all of which seemed to be bottomless, probably going down to the floor level of the cañon. We speculated that Don Pablo might have fallen into one of these, thinking he was following the gallery to the shaft. But the theory of the narrow path outside the south gallery seemed most probable and we came back to that spot irresistibly.

"We will go up," said Lawson in his usual decided manner, "and we will take up the beds of Mr. Duncan, Clint, and French Louis, but we will leave Don Pablo's in case of his return. We will also leave provisions enough to last him a few days, for we will visit this cavern again before we pull up stakes. This afternoon I will go down the cañon the way I went yesterday and on through to the spot below this. To make sure we will throw over a dummy and I will easily know that I have the right place."

Accordingly we rolled up a small piece of canvas that Louis had used in his kitchen and putting some loose stones in it for ballast we tied them securely with twine. This we heaved out from the narrow path I had examined and let it fall into the soundless depth below.

"Now I will go till I find that," said Lawson, "and if the body of Don Pablo is beside it I will come up and get you all for the funeral, for no matter if he would be a murderer, we will give him decent burial just the same."

I begged to be allowed to go with him. But he said I had had enough for one day. I considered him in much worse plight than myself, and I feared his going by that dread camp of the Apaches, but he assured me there was not the slightest danger, and, after helping us get the beds to the treasure house, he set out with his long swinging stride to the cañon past the dead Apache ledge.

CHAPTER XXX

A LAST HAZARD

THAT afternoon I could not rest in camp for thinking of Don Pablo and his mysterious disappearance. I was convinced that he would not attempt his own life and I did not think him so awkward as to stumble and fall over the cliff nor yet to step into one of the pits in the darkness of the mine. Nor could I allow with Lawson that Don Pablo would be overcome with chagrin after the reaction of committing a supposed murder. Don Pablo was no novice in killing, as witness my father and his family. I had known, too, his shooting of servants who angered him, and of one Mexican at a festival in the village. It was not for nothing that the entire neighborhood feared Don Pablo, and French Louis was to be pitied more than condemned, for there were others of the same spirit at the hacienda.

Mr. Duncan was the only one Don Pablo never bullied, and it was probable that even now he did not care to meet him for he dreaded the steady coldness of his eyes. Lawson he would fight in an instant, and eat a good dinner afterward. I am not sure that I do him wrong in saying that he would shoot Lawson without so much as giving him the fairness of a duel. For he considered Lawson a worthless crack-brained sort

of a fellow, a prospector, and to be kept in his place. He allowed him a seat at his table when out on an expedition like this, but in the hacienda Lawson ate with the bosses and rarely was asked into the great parlor.

No sooner had Miguel and I arrived at camp with the beds than Mr. Duncan came out of his tent equipped with his boots and his notebook.

"I am going down to Casa Blanca, McClintock," he said without even noticing what we brought back. "I want to make some measurements and drawings. Tell Miguel he need have no cause to fear a betrayal of the mine. I will even put the drawings in his keeping if he desires it. That door and the vaulting of the treasure house are especially valuable. It would be a shame if they are not put on record."

He passed on down the hill, merely nodding familiarly to the old guide and I was surprised to find Miguel in no way uneasy when I acquainted him with the antiquarian's mission.

"He has sworn," Miguel answered me briefly and there seemed to be no idea of betrayal of the oath. Mr. Duncan, Lawson, Carlos or myself were free to move out of or into the treasure or the mine without question, so great was Miguel's trust after we had sworn. I think Mr. Duncan realized this perfectly at the time, and had only given me the message to Miguel to quiet my own fears for his safety, but he was a man who rarely went into minute explanations and was always to be misunderstood in a matter of his own exoneration.

"Miguel," I said suddenly, "when you were looking for the spot above the south gallery, when you thought I lay dead in the cañon, did you succeed in locating the place?"

"I think we did," he said. "Mr. Duncan and I were pretty well agreed."

"Is it easy of access from here?"

"Not easy but we can get to it with a little trouble. We can go around most of the chasms, two we have to bridge with tent poles."

"Miguel, we will go there now. We will continue the search for Don Pablo."

"Very well, Don Clinto," he said quietly.

"We will take Carlos. Louis will look after the animals. He will not be afraid to be alone now that he knows the Apaches are dead."

"He does not seem to be afraid of anything now," said Miguel. "I don't think he cares any more."

"Well, I will give him his orders, and you call in Carlos, Miguel. We will take all the rope there is in camp. Tie the pack ropes together. Also take the tent poles and the pulley and tackle. I am going down over the cliff. You will know what will best come in handy. Would it be all right to put the ropes on a mule?"

"It would be much easier till we get to the first chasm, after that we would have to carry the things."

"Very well, hurry, Miguel. We must get there before Lawson comes back."

It was not long before we were started. Carlos was especially jubilant that at last he was to share an

adventure, for heretofore he had been left to watch the mules while the rest were enjoying all the danger. He showed himself to be very alert and resourceful in getting across the chasms, for we soon had to leave the mule to make his way back to the herd while we went on foot with ropes and poles, either leaping or bridging the crevasses. I have never anywhere seen such a tangle of yawning gaps in my life. It seems that in the earlier geologic ages these chasms were what are called dykes and were filled up from the bottom with lava or rock crowded up with great pressure. This rock was probably the matrix of the gold nuggets and with centuries it had disintegrated and settled, leaving the original rock standing high and dry. I give this only as my own speculation, for Mr. Duncan never spoke with me on the subject and I have never consulted a geologist on the matter, as up to this time I have never spoken of those days, but have tried to put all concerning them from my mind. Whatever the explanation, the chasms were there for us to cross, like the rents of some terrible earthquake; rarely could we see to the bottom of them, and a stone cast down into the darkness went tumbling and striking against the sides till the distance made the sound of it inaudible.

I confess to a shudder as I leaped them, but Carlos only laughed as he vaulted over. Sometimes he had a bridge ready of the tent poles, and Miguel took the precaution of tying a strong cord around my waist, in the manner of a high mountain climber, and attaching the other end to his own. Carlos was left to run free

and unencumbered by the rope, but whenever Miguel crossed after me, Carlos was stationed so as to support me in case the old man should fall, and he was instructed to cut the rope with his knife if there was danger of my being dragged over. I was touched by this tribute to my position not as a matter of personal affection, but as a sign that now he was no longer needed, as we were all the acknowledged guardians of the mine.

In an hour's time we reached the edge of an open chasm and Miguel showed me a little pile of stones that he and Mr. Duncan had arranged the day before as being, so near as they could estimate, precisely over the gallery of the mine. We selected a firm edge of the precipice and set to work to rig a derrick and tackle and I tried to busy my mind with the details of the preparation, for whenever I thought of swinging out over, my heart came into my mouth, and there seemed to stay, without beating. Carlos was disappointed that he was not permitted to go down in my place, but I showed him how much stronger he was than I, as well as being heavier to manage. I was very slight and small for my age and I could swing over as lightly as a spider that lets down from the ceiling on his web. The good fellow was made to take some comfort when he was told that my life was in his hands.

"Trust in me and the rope, Clinto," he said gayly, "and you are as easy as in the saddle of a broncho."

It was my plan to go down seated on a bar as I had done in the shaft, but Miguel persuaded me to have

the rope tied simply around my body as that would leave my arms and legs free to push myself from the cliff. He soon netted a perfect harness to support me, and when all was ready I lay down on the edge of the precipice, told them to stand ready at the rope and crawled backward into the emptiness of the chasm.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN MID-AIR

THE first terror was from dizziness and blindness, for some dirt had got into my eyes. I gave the signal to stop, for we had arranged a code of signals between us, and a small cord being fastened to my wrist was payed out by the careful Miguel. Immediately they ceased lowering the rope, and when my eyes were cleared a little from the bits of gravel, I tried to turn my gaze down below to accustom myself to the dizziness. A deathly sickness at the pit of my stomach was the only result of the attempt. How I longed to give the signal to draw up, but no, I would not let myself think of it. I put my hands on my breast to hold in, if possible, the bursting feeling within me, and kept my feet close together, that they might at least have the sensation of touching something. Then I gave one jerk to my cord which was the signal for lowering away. I kept my eyes on the face of the cliff when I could, but the fickle rope would keep turning and so rob me of that little comfort.

I found that I quickly accustomed myself to the situation, however, and could have the advantage of looking up and down the chasm, and I began to set my thoughts on Don Pablo and the hope I had of finding him. I even nerved myself to look once below, and it

was lucky for me that I did so for a narrow ledge was close to my feet and the touch of it would have given me a shock. As it was now I gave a thrust with my feet at the right time and swung out enough to clear it. I had next to use my hands to keep free from it, but the touch of the firm earth seemed to brace me, and I could easily look down below as I saw now another ledge approaching. As there was easily room to stand upon this one, I determined to try to make a landing and accustom myself to my work. This was easy to do as there was a shelf two feet wide. I gave two jerks, the signal to stop, when I felt my feet touch the ground. I then set my back to the cliff and to my relief found that I was getting control of my nausea and was able to look about me with some ease.

I could see the top of one of the obelisk towers opposite me which I knew was some ten feet below the level from which I had started. I estimated it to be a hundred feet up. I had then some two hundred feet to go yet, for Mr. Duncan had made a reading with his aneroid and I remembered having heard him say the first evening that Casa Blanca was three hundred feet lower than the camp. Now, as the cliff where Miguel and Carlos were standing was considerably below the level of the camp I reckoned that it would make up the difference between Casa Blanca and the mine. Our rope was about three hundred and fifty feet long, for Miguel had done a neat job of splicing the two coils we had brought from the camp. We had also some of the pack ropes handy in case I wished to go lower than the gallery of the mine. It had been

my idea to swing below that, and if possible to get a view down from the projecting ledge. Of course this had been much better done from the mine itself but I had given Lawson a promise on his setting out that I would not go into the mine. So there I was swinging in the open trying to get a view into the window as I was lowered from the roof above. I confess it had such fascination for me I was never able to let it alone.

Quite master of my situation after a rest, I swung my legs over the precipice and gave the signal to lower away. This time there was a steady descent, the rock almost perpendicular, sloping neither inward nor outward as a rule, so that I swung clear of everything but could still touch the surface with my hands. I went down steadily, I must be nearing the level of the mine and, sure enough, on my wrist I caught the slight signal that Miguel was to give for three hundred feet, one, two, three very gentle pulls on the cord. I would hardly have noticed them had I not been on the lookout, he was probably afraid of hurting my arm. I replied with the signal to lower away and began to look about me very sharply for some signs of the gallery of the mine. A little ledge jutted out again below me, scarcely more than a foot wide, but still a ledge. I succeeded in getting my feet established on it after some difficulty, and gave the signal to hold steady with my cord. Then I looked about me to get bearings on which side lay the opening to the gallery. On my right, as I stood with my back to the cliff, rose one of the obelisk towers, on my left, about thirty feet from me, the face of the cliff rounded inward and the

view was thus obstructed on both sides, which I felt to be most disappointing. I determined to try the obelisk first and I carefully crept along the path; there was little danger in doing this for the rope was slack and could yield for several feet. Even if I should slip, the rope would hold me and the obelisk was very quickly gained.

To my delight I found it joined the cliff at this level and the little path curved neatly in behind it. It was a relief to have the great void shut out for a time and I stopped to recover from the wild sense of flying. Signaling them to lower away a little I got enough slack on the rope to enable me to creep through the little alley and peer out again for a view down the cañon. To my disappointment the cliff again rounded inward and my view was not more than twenty feet, but the little ledge continued, even broadening, though going rather precipitously down. Then, on the outermost corner before it disappeared, I saw a little bunch of resurrection plants and I felt sure that their moisture came from the mist of the waterfall, and in that direction surely would be the gallery and possibly the little ledge would lead to it. The question now came, should I try to make the trial of exploring it? To do so I would have to cast off my rope for it would not travel along the cliff any farther, it bound against the obelisk in front and would be altogether impossible to manage. I soon decided that I could not take the risk. I would go up and have them move the derrick rather. Once more I crept around behind the obelisk and was getting on the ledge before giving the signal to hoist when

my attention was drawn to "a sign" as Lawson taught me to call them. This time it was not an Apache sign but rather the sign used in tracking an animal. It was no more than an overturned stone on the ledge, a stone about the size and shape of a thimble without, of course, being hollow inside. This stone was lying on its side whereas the apex should be upwards. How did I know this? Lawson had taught me the difference between the weathered and unweathered side of a stone. This is a useful thing in tracking lost animals and no mountaineer's education is considered complete without it.

This stone lay with the unweathered base exposed. It gave me a fright just to see it. It was not more than three feet from where I was sitting, but it was to the left, not to the right. I was positive that I had not overturned it. I had not taken a step beyond the place where I sat. Even when I landed at first it had not been so far out as that. I told myself that of course I must have done it, but all the time I knew it could not be true. No animal surely would come along here; it would be possible for Don Pablo to pass that way to escape from his horror of the mine. He would not go backward, I knew him, but if I should follow around I might overtake him. Surely the ledge shelf would not continue far, he might be within forty feet of me around the corner, or he might have fallen, in that case leaving some sign as he went over the edge of the rock.

It took me some minutes to work up my courage. I was trembling with excessive agitation, the path was

very narrow around the corner but I was safe being tied to my rope. I somehow felt now that the mystery would be revealed if only I rounded that corner. After all, I had not come thus far to be a coward, and giving a shout of "Don Pablo," I got up and staggered along. My voice was a faint squeak, it seemed to me, and I halted to get it in better control. Then I called again:

"Don Pablo, I am coming! It is Clint. I was not killed in the cañon. I am down on a rope. I am coming, don't shoot me, I am coming to help you."

I told myself this was foolish as I did it, calling out into vacancy that way. I listened but I got no reply. Still I was not really surprised as I rounded the corner to see my old master not twenty feet beyond me, sitting on the narrow ledge of rock, his knees hanging off into vacancy, staring at me in terror from his bloodshot and once beautiful eyes.

CHAPTER XXXII

LOVE THAT PASSETH UNDERSTANDING

IT was so horrible, so pitiful to see him staring, that I began calling out to him wistfully; I felt such a love in my heart for the master, like a sick man there before me.

"It is Clint, Don Pablo, only Clint. You didn't hurt me at all when you threw me, for I landed in a palm tree, like a cradle, and I easily slipped down to the cañon. There were some Apaches down there and they fed me, and Lawson came down and brought me up, and we came down in the mine to find you, and we couldn't find you anywhere, Don Pablo. Lawson thought you had slipped from the cliff, and he is down below looking for your body, but Miguel let me down from the rocks and I have come to get you, Don Pablo."

I could see the fear was going from his eyes and I kept on saying the same thing over and over. I knew that he thought I really was a ghost and it was so horrible to feel he should fear me. After a while I saw he was convinced and I stopped then the flood of talk I had been pouring out.

"Won't you speak to me, Don Pablo?" I begged. "Won't you speak to me and say you're glad to see me?"

He moved his lips as if in pain at the effort, I could see that they were cracked and parched as in fever. It was as if he had forgotten how to speak, and it was an agony for him to force the words from him.

"Have you a drop of water, Clint, about you?"

Then I knew it was the thirst that was burning him. He had been on this cliff for three days.

"I did not bring my canteen with me," I said, "but I will run back to the gallery and get you a drink. I saw your canteen on the shelf this morning. Wait, I will throw off this rope."

In my haste I untied the rope and let it slip from me without thinking, but I gave a signal to Miguel with the cord, "wait," before loosening it from my wrist.

"I will run and get you some water, Don Pablo. I will be back in a moment with water."

I was turning to hurry along the path when he held up his hand as if to stop me. "Wait, it is dangerous," he said.

I only laughed in reply. "I am like a mountain goat, I go anywhere. I will be back in a moment with water."

But still he held up his hand. "Don't go, I want to look at you," he answered.

It was so pitiful to see him. "But I will come back, I will," I urged.

"You will fall, it is Hell's path," he said.

"No, no, I will not fall, I will bring water, fresh water, your own canteen, Don Pablo. Let me go, I will be back in an instant."

A pang of desire swept over his face. "Go, boy," he said then, "and God bless you."

I think I was so happy with that, that I could have run along the cliff as on wings. I hardly heeded now where I put my feet and rounded the dizzy heights without thinking. Soon I was crawling over the parapet into the mine, my mine, and filling the empty canteen at the fountain. I slung it around my neck on my back and thrust some bread and meat into my shirt-front.

How longingly he was looking at my return; and I went over and knelt down beside him. I offered him the canteen but his hands were clasping the ledge on which he was sitting. I could see the fear of dizziness was on him, had probably been on him for days. I held the canteen to his lips.

"Drink, Don Pablo, I will hold it. I will hold it."

He drank long and gratefully. I could see how the water seemed to bless him, then he motioned that I should take the canteen down. I tore open my shirt to get the bread, I had left my outer shirt on the rocks above and was carrying the bread in my undershirt next my body.

"Here, eat, it will strengthen you," I said, "and then I will get the rope and tell them to draw you up."

But he only sat looking at my breast.

"What is that you are wearing around your neck?" he asked, for Lawson had that morning given me back the charm, though in my excitement I had forgotten and exposed it. The toy seemed to please him in some way. I suppose he was weak with his fasting

but anyway he did not take the bread, though with an effort he took one hand from the rock. He put his hand to my breast instead, and took the charm softly in his hold, but he steadied his hand on my body as his fingers were fondling the charm gently.

"What is it?" he asked after a silence.

"It is the pledge of the ancients to protect the mine. I put it on in the treasure house. I could not help it. It seemed that the gold was cruel like a snake and it was bringing us to hate one another. I did not mean harm by it, Don Pablo, it was not against you that I swore, it was only to protect the gold of the ancients and perhaps a little out of love for old Miguel. You know he saved my life, Don Pablo, from my father's burning house; and he is my foster father, and I could not see him suffer, and he wears a charm just like this one and he swore at the deathbed of his father. He tried to kill me the first time that I saw it on his neck, but when I found this, and put it on, he came to love me. Now he trusts me with anything. You won't blame me, you won't blame me, Don Pablo."

"Put it on my neck, Clint," he said and I could see that he really meant it, and when I put the cord around his neck and slipped the little plate of malachite on his bare breast, strangely heaving, he said, "I swear to protect the treasure of the mine."

And then two great tears came from his eyes and rolled down the hollows of his cheeks and I think they were the first tears he had shed since I knew him, and my hands were still resting on his shoulders.

CHAPTER XXXIII

NEW DANGERS

It was long before I could induce him to eat and then only a few mouthfuls of bread. But I was glad to see him take his other hand from the rock for I could see that he was losing the fear of dizziness.

"I will go and get the rope and tie it around you and take you back to the obelisk," I said.

He put out his hand to keep me to him, but I was sure it was not for fear that he would hold me. In time, however, I got the rope and tied it to him and gave the signal that they should gently draw him up. They did so very gently and I imagined that they knew by the added weight it was Don Pablo, and suspected that I might wish they should go slowly. I signaled them to stop when he was standing, and, slowly, very slowly, for his legs were stiffened, I got him swung and dragged along the cliff to the security of the niche behind the obelisk. There I got him to rest, to eat and drink, but I feared to send him up the cliff at once, for the vigor of his arms was slow in returning, and I feared his face would drag against the cliff if he did not have his arms strong to keep himself away. I saw, too, that he did not want to go up: that he only shook his head when I suggested it. But he lay down in the passageway behind the rock, and then, in a

moment, I saw he was asleep. I realized that he had been sitting on the ledge, perhaps for two days, and that he could not sleep for dizziness of falling. He even was afraid to creep back, and as he stiffened, it was impossible to do so.

I sat down and wrote a note to Carlos, for we had arranged for this before I had descended. I told them that I had Don Pablo, that he would come up as soon as he had rested, though maybe that would not be till morning, that I would send up word again before dark and that the rope and the signals were working finely. This I tied on to the cord and gave the signal of "a letter, and hoist away." You will think we had remarkable memories, but the fact is, I had written out a little code while they were rigging the ropes and pulleys and this I had given to Carlos, who read and wrote Spanish very well. Of course I had provided myself with paper and pencil but, indeed, I was never without that, for a little notebook in which I wrote my diary was always tucked within my shirt. So I watched the letter flutter up the cliff and then sat down beside Don Pablo completely happy.

I think a father by his son must have the same feeling, if perhaps the child is sleeping after a sickness. It was not long before he woke and looked around wildly, but I was careful to let him know that I was real, and not a dream, and I got him to take a drink and eat a little. Indeed this time his hunger seemed upon him and I was glad of this for it showed his fear was going, and I gave him some dry beef, but not too much. He pressed me to eat with him and so earnestly

that I bit off a mouthful just to please him. I also took a sip from the canteen but it was nearly empty now, and I knew every drop was precious. I offered to take the trip down and get more water but Don Pablo said I should never move a step.

We sat very quiet for a time and again he went to sleep and I wondered why the cord did not return to me. Pretty soon it did with a bit of rock tied to it for a weight. I learned afterwards that it kept resting on the two upper ledges and they had to draw it up and cast again. Finally they threw it out far enough to miss the ledges and this time it came swinging down in reach. There was a little note tied in with the stone, written on the back of my own letter.

It said, "If Don Pablo comes up how about the secret of the mine?" And then I blamed myself for a very stupid fellow, for of course I should have told them that he had taken the oath. I wrote this hurriedly on the paper and was just tying it on the cord, when, to my surprise, the big rope which was left swinging, began rapidly to go up the side of the cliff.

"They think the cord did not reach me, perhaps," I said at first, though I had given them the signal when receiving it. It made me uneasy to see the rope going up but I reflected that if worst came to worst I could return by the mine and Casa Blanca, and Don Pablo was now comfortable here.

"Who knows, but after he is refreshed," I said, "he will walk back the path easily to the mine." I remembered, however, that I myself had been afraid to attempt it at first, and I wrote a question on the note

and gave the signal to draw up. The cord did not move but hung idly. What was the matter at the top? Then I reflected that they were still pulling up the rope perhaps. Then I waited. I sat down by Don Pablo and tried to feel happy as I had done before, but the sight of that rising rope had made me restless.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DUEL

DON PABLO was tortured with dreams, and I was on the point of waking him to reassure him, when I heard a sound in the air above my head and looked up to see Lawson descending. He saw me, too, and waved his hand to me, but I took little comfort from the greeting. Don Pablo leaped up from his sleep and I knew that I was powerless between them. I tried to call out, to explain, but I might as well have tried to stop a whirlwind. Lawson had his revolver in his hand.

"Defend yourself, you coward," he called out. "Get back, Clint, I have a bullet for that murderer."

Lawson swung on a level with our ledge but he could not get his footing established.

I hoped they would let him down and I jerked on the signal cord that they should do so. It was my idea to get him beneath us and then explain how matters stood with us, but in my excitement I may have given the wrong signal, or old Miguel may have purposely misunderstood me, for instead of the big rope's descending, the little rope was quickly drawn up, and I learned afterwards that Lawson had marked the rope on the cliff's edge before drawing it up, and, not trusting to any bother with signals he had told them to let him down till that mark, and then wait for a letter

on the cord. Now he swung directly opposite us, his eyes glaring with hatred and excitement, calling on me to go back behind the rock, and cursing at Don Pablo for a coward.

"You keep the boy around you to prevent me from shooting," he called. "Put him back and take your medicine like a man."

Don Pablo had already drawn his revolver but I could see that his hand was quivering like an aspen leaf. He made an effort to thrust me behind him, and it was then that the shooting began. I have no idea which one shot first but both of them emptied their revolvers and still there seemed nobody hit. They were both at such great disadvantage, Lawson swinging about in the open air and Don Pablo quite weak with exhaustion, hardly able to hold out his pistol.

When the smoke and the noise cleared away, I saw that Lawson was trying another plan now. With the barrel of his still smoking pistol he was pushing against the face of the rock, he was getting himself to swing like a pendulum, and not outward, but sideways toward us; he had found a little angle in the cliff's face that would give him the direction he desired. One, two, three times, he came toward us, each time coming nearer and nearer. Don Pablo was standing ready to receive him; try as I would, I could not possibly draw him back. On the fourth swing Lawson reached the cliff, the men clinched, Don Pablo leaping on him, but the footing failed and they both swung out over, the rope squeaking and straining with the weight.

It was like two eagles fighting in the heavens, and

the bitterness of the struggle made me sicken. Still I could not take my eyes from them, though I had now ceased all attempts to cry out. I could see that Lawson had every advantage, for Don Pablo's strength was no more than a child's. Indeed if Lawson had let go of him I feel sure he would have dropped with his own weight, but Lawson did not seem to realize this, nor wish it. He wanted to get his hands around Don Pablo's throat and strangle him in the fury of his vengeance.

Then, something happened, something beautiful. I think you can guess what it was. Yes, when Don Pablo's head was thrust back as his own clutch on Lawson's throat was weakening, his bare breast was exposed to Lawson's gaze and the green malachite charm lay upon it. I have spoken before of Lawson's quickness of thought, nor did it fail him even in this excitement, for Don Pablo was already loosening his grasp, was falling almost backward in the chasm, when Lawson's strong arms reversed their action and drew in the swinging body to his own. More than that, he caught the loose end of the rope that was dangling, for he was tied up in the harness as I had been, and passing it beneath Don Pablo's arms, in an instant, he had knotted it securely, and the two men hung bound together there, breast to breast, almost even lip to lip.

"Friends now," said Lawson very calmly and Don Pablo quite as calmly whispered, "Friends."

I think at that moment, though, he fainted; for the rope that bound him tightened with the strain.

CHAPTER XXXV

CONTENT

LAWSON waited a moment to get breath and began taking off his belt.

"You take my six-shooter, Clint," he said, tossing it over, "and my cartridge belt, and take Don Pablo's, too."

Though his feet rested slightly on the ledge of rock he did not try to walk to me at the obelisk, nor to push himself out over as before.

"We'll make a rope of the belts, Clint," he said, "and then you can tow us safely in. Don't reach out but stand well behind the rock. Our four belts with yours will make a good rope and there's no use being hasty in these matters. I think I have hurt my leg somehow, I may not be able to walk with it. Take your time. Clint will have us in a minute," this to Don Pablo, who was making some slight effort to turn around and look at me.

Under Lawson's directions I soon had a rope full ten feet long made up of our double belts and Don Pablo's sash. Lawson took one end of it and fastened it to the rope that bound them together, then I walked safely back into the niche behind the obelisk and drew them in. I untied the rope that bound them and then set Lawson free from his harness but I was

bothered by little black spots flying about my eyes and seemed to fumble a good bit at the untying.

"What are you trying to brush away, Clint?" said Lawson looking at me sharply.

"Such a swarm of gnats," I said, "about my eyes and the smell of them I guess is making me faint."

Then Lawson turned me around quickly. "I've shot him," he gasped sinking on the ground. "Now it's you, Don Pablo, that will have to kill me."

It did turn out that I had a bullet in my breast and the blood was all the time running down my back. Lawson had a wound too in the calf of his leg, and we both of us sat there weak enough, staring at each other, we would all three have fainted, we said afterwards, had there been some one present to bring us to. So we sat weakly looking at our wounds and I wondered if I would die now that the mine was saved. Don Pablo said he thought my bullet had glanced a rib and gone around because I would feel worse if it had penetrated a lung. And Lawson said his little flesh wound was really nothing, but we none of us felt like really doing anything, and the evening was gathering in, and soon it would be sunset. We sat there for a half hour rather stupidly, not saying much and never anything of moment. Don Pablo asked about his horse and Lawson said Louis was looking out for him. I remember making some remark about the weather, saying that the rainy season was still several months ahead.

It was the cheery voice of Carlos that aroused us. He was scrambling up the cliff path from the mine.

"Clinto, Clinto," he kept calling.

Lawson made out to answer back, and soon the boy was with us behind the obelisk, radiant and happy from the danger he had just passed, different from us three, oh, very different. He went over and embraced Don Pablo, reverently, looking at the charm upon his breast.

"We will have you all back in good shape before dark and the horses are all in good condition."

We had no sooner got through welcoming Carlos than Louis came down the rope hand over hand. There was no sign of fright about him this time and we were impressed to see him do what none of us would have dared.

"A rope is nothing," he said, stepping lightly to the ledge and showing no dizziness whatever at the precipice.

"You are just the man we need," said Carlos joyfully, "but first we will send a letter to my grandfather." With that he discharged his pistol in the air. "He will meet us at the camp," he said calmly. "I told him we would go back by the mine."

It was curious to see this boy in command of the whole party, but it was so, and he asked of us no questions. Louis was his first lieutenant, too, it seemed, and we listened to them as if we were children.

"Don Clinto first," he said, and proceeded to tie me between himself and Louis in the manner that I was fastened when setting out.

It was an easy trip to creep around the face of the cliff with two such guides. I was ashamed that I had not risked it in the morning. Mr. Duncan was wait-

ing to receive me. He said he had been interrupted by Carlos in the treasure house, and came along to see how we all were. He pronounced my wound not dangerous, but he thought it would prove painful; the bullet had glanced as Don Pablo thought.

"Lucky those mad men did not have their rifles," he remarked; but he swore less than usual, and was even courteous as Don Pablo appeared over the parapet tied close between his steady helping guides.

"Lawson next," said Carlos gayly, hurrying back, "and a good thing, too, for the twilight is closing in."

Some time elapsed, however, and they did not appear. It was really getting dark, Mr. Duncan was worried. But at last we heard them coming around the corner. It proved that Lawson's leg was getting stiff, he was leaning heavily on Carlos and more than once, he said afterwards, they would have gone off the cliff, had it not been for the strength and coolness of French Louis. Lawson was really very humble at that time.

It was decided that Lawson could not go farther that night, and Don Pablo said he would stay in the mine with him. We were all much surprised at this and I asked if I might stay, too, to keep them company, whereat Don Pablo put his hand around my cheek and stood thus before them all, while he said I could, and I thought he had purposely left his shirt unbuttoned at the throat that we could see the green charm lying on his heart.

Louis stayed with us to arrange things for the supper and Carlos came back bringing out beds. He said

his grandfather was staying with the animals, that he was very tired but very well content. It was like old faithful Miguel to keep himself out of sight now his victory was accomplished, and to give all the credit to another. For myself I took very little for the mine, but as I lay between my two friends on the floor of the south gallery, as I thought that they were sleeping now so peaceably, it seemed to me the first happy moment of my life. I was all aglow with the wild sweet joy of living.

CHAPTER XXXVI

FRENCH LOUIS

THE next morning Miguel stood before us and Don Pablo rose, went to him and embraced him in the Mexican fashion.

"You did well, Miguel," he said simply. "I have sworn, and all your rites shall be respected."

"Forgive me, master," the old Indian said half sobbing.

Don Pablo's voice was husky, but his pride was with him still. "You are an old fool, Miguel, an old fool."

When all was ready for our departure to the camp, Miguel came forward once more.

"Well?" said Don Pablo.

"It is Louis, sir, he is the only one who has not sworn, of course we might take him up the shaft."

"Louis," said Don Pablo calling to him.

"Yes, Don Pablo," and Louis came forward, gently but without the old-time cringing.

"Miguel will take you through the treasure house of the mine. There is gold there, much gold, but you must swear you will not touch it or even speak of it, otherwise you must go up through the shaft."

"What is gold to a disgraced man?" answered Louis.

"Are you, too, disgraced?"

"I was a coward, sir, to let you lay hands on the boy."

"So you were, I had forgotten," said Don Pablo. "The next time you see me lose control of my temper that way you can kick me like a brute."

"I will swear," said Louis, after the silence that followed.

Don Pablo took the charm from off his neck.

"Give him the oath, Miguel, after the custom of your people." And as the old Indian stood with his hands upraised, I thought him like the ancient priest of Aaron whom the light of God made radiant from the clouds.

Don Pablo stood gravely to take the charm after Miguel had once more lifted it from Louis's neck.

"Now we are sworn brothers, Louis, and we will shake hands and you will shake hands with all the men in the camp, and if any man says you are a coward knock him down, and be sure you never say it of yourself."

"After all it takes Don Pablo to carry a thing through," whispered Lawson after we had shaken hands with Louis each in turn. "Now when I had that string put over my head I felt like a sheep, and even Mr. Duncan had to snigger. But Don Pablo bears his titles like a king. That's because he's a gentleman, Clint, even an education can't quite make a gentleman."

CHAPTER XXXVII

WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT?

WE remained very quiet for a day but were not unhappy for all the quiet. I asked Don Pablo to go out with me on the hill and I would show him the place I found the talisman. We sat down there and looked off toward the mine, with its causeway, and cavern, and Casa Blanca. The horses were pasturing around us, and Carlos and Miguel came up to speak to us. Don Pablo was so gentle toward them that they could not help hovering in the neighborhood.

Pretty soon we saw Mr. Duncan coming up the hill, he had just been completing his drawings. He also stopped to chat very amiably and tell of the vaulting of the treasure house.

"And what are we going to do with that gold, Miguel?" asked Don Pablo. "Do you want to go away and leave it to some other robber or do you want to settle down here to guard it?"

Miguel shifted uneasily but did not speak.

"Suppose you and Carlos go and bring Lawson," said Don Pablo, "and we will talk it over together. You can get him on a mule, can't you, without hurting his leg? Oh, yes, and bring Louis over, too."

So it was we sat in consultation, with the lowering sun shining on the mine.

"If you should ask my advice," said Lawson with

his usual promptness, "I should say take all that gold from the treasure house, carry it back into the mine and scatter it abroad in those black pits. It will be all it's worth to recover it in case anyone suspects its existence."

We all looked toward Miguel, but his face showed no change of emotion.

"I think Lawson is right," said Carlos, speaking up quickly. "Forgive me for being the first. The words came into my mouth."

"Clint, what do you say?" asked Don Pablo.

"I think Lawson is right, sir, only I would blow up the causeway afterward. We don't know who next may come along and we have sworn to keep everyone from the treasure."

"Mr. Duncan next," said Don Pablo.

"If we blow up the causeway we might as well blow up the Casa Blanca, too. As long as I cannot publish the drawings, I don't see why another fellow should get them."

"Louis next."

"Throw the gold into the pits," said Louis stolidly.

"Now, Miguel, we have all given an opinion, it is for you to say what shall be done."

"What do you say, Don Pablo?" asked Miguel.

"I think they are all right, Miguel. How is it possible for us to protect the mine? Even to stay here would be to draw attention to it. And the settlements are working this way. Twenty years will see many white men in this region."

"It is done then. To-morrow we will begin; but it

is hard for an old man to get this work done before he dies."

The next day Mr. Duncan offered to stay in camp and keep his eye on the animals so as to leave Louis free to carry the gold. As I was very sore in my bandages, and Lawson could only walk lamely, he and I were established in the treasure house to pack up the nuggets in shot bags; then Carlos and Louis carried them to the mines where Don Pablo and Miguel scattered them in the pits. We worked till late in the afternoon but no one kept count of the bagfuls nor did anyone take interest in the value. We looked upon it merely as a necessary task to accomplish.

Then the dynamite was carried in and arranged, and a fuse of an hour's length set in train of it. We all went up the hill, tired enough, except Carlos who had asked the privilege of touching it off. This was readily acceded to by all of us. Then we went out on the hill once more to watch, and even Carlos had ceased now with his chatter. Casa Blanca was the first to blow up, the walls reared and tumbled over inward; then came a tremendous explosion, but we thought at first the causeway was going to hold. It cracked, wavered, hung for a moment and then went plunging downward into the abyss. I thought of how it must look from the spot where three days ago I lay with the Apache with the grasses and bushes on my back. The wounded Apache was dead now, the causeway was a falling mass of stones, all things were coming to an end as must our comradeship sitting here together.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

TREASURE TROVE

My story has no more worth the telling. We started back for the hacienda the next day, we were all of us sad enough in leaving, for we realized that things would soon begin to change.

"I have been talking with Lawson and Mr. Duncan, Clint," said Don Pablo one day on the march. "It is my plan to give you a fifth of my property to make up in some small way for the wrong that I did your father. Mr. Duncan has consented to be your guardian in conjunction with a lawyer in New York. Lawson wants you to go to school and he is right. You had better set out in September."

"You want to get rid of me, Don Pablo."

"For a time, perhaps I do," he admitted. "But not because I love you less, McClintock."

"Call me Clint. You must always call me Clint."

"Well, I will call you that if you like, but we have never given you a name yet, and now we want to. We have agreed upon Paul Lawson McClintock. Mr. Duncan says, as godfather, he will not come in for a name. He wants my name, Paul, and I want it, and of course we both of us want Lawson. You will come to the rancho for vacations so long as you do not wish to go somewhere else. The rancho will be lonely

without you, but you will realize as you grow to be a man that it is necessary oftentimes to be lonely."

"Come now," he said, as if a load was off his mind. "We will have nothing of sadness at parting. We have been to seek a treasure, and we have found it, and we will celebrate with joy and thanksgiving."

All that was thirty years ago. At first I went often to the rancho but now it is twenty years since I have seen it.

Don Pablo married the year after our expedition. His wife was a Mexican lady from Chihuahua. There are three boys and two girls down there who call me Uncle Clinto and every Christmas I send them a box of goodies. No matter if they are grown up and have children of their own. I remember them only as "the children."

Mr. Duncan never published his description of Casa Blanca but he left it in my care in his will. Some day I will bring it out in his name, the "whipper-snapper student" shall not have it.

Lawson is still a prospector and still a wanderer. I get a letter from him regularly once a year. He gave up Mexico and went to Alaska, but now is somewhere in Colorado, I imagine. Once, twice he has made his stake but he never keeps money long, nor ever lacks it. He parted from Don Pablo immediately on returning. He wanted to remember him as he was then, he said; and he also did not want to see me go away. I have seen him twice since; once while in college and again only two years ago.

Carlos married and had a large family of boys to grow up and work for Don Pablo.

Louis lived and died at the hacienda.

We, living ones, hear from each other sometimes, as you see; but since the day of our setting out from the mine we have never talked those adventures over. I have the malachite charm, but I never wear it, nor show it to anyone. Not even to my own boys do I show it. The other one was buried with Miguel.

You may wonder that I am writing this now. I do it at the request of Don Pablo and Carlos, and with the knowledge and consent of Lawson. Of course I have changed the names. My own name is not Paul Lawson McClintock but it is true that my foster nephews and nieces do call me Uncle Clinto, God bless them.





